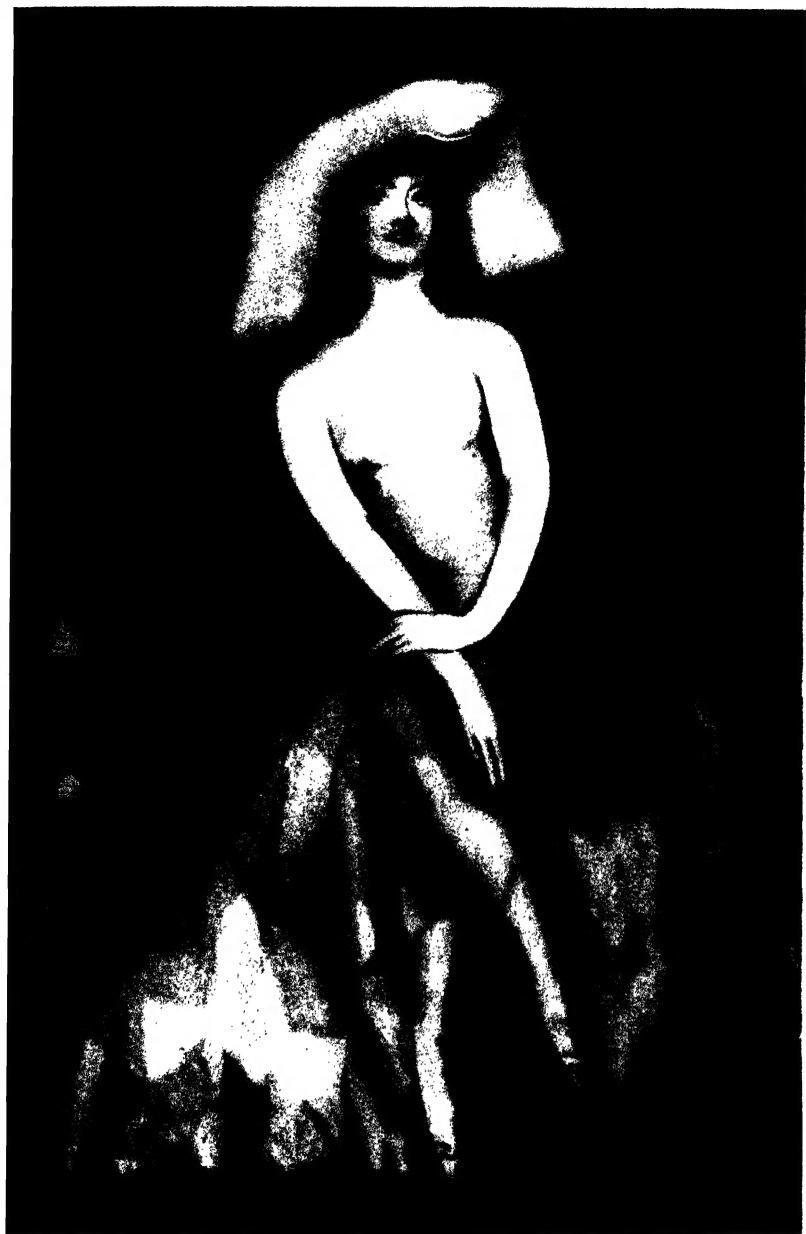


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THE ELEGANT WOMAN



PORTRAIT OF A LADY
Oil-painting by Fritz Schwarz-Waldegg
1928

THE
ELEGANT WOMAN

From the Rococo Period to
Modern Times

By
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Translated with a Preface by
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

FOR what the Germans call *Sittengeschichte* and the French *histoire des mœurs* there is no equivalent word in the English language. We do not take easily to the idea of evolution, although it was an Englishman who gave it currency; we like to think that manners (or at least good manners) have no history; we are no adepts in the philosophy of change. But the Germans have the historical spirit developed to a high degree, and everything, even a woman's underwear, must be made to fit into the philosophical framework of their minds. The French were the first chroniclers of fashion, the Germans its first scientific historians, and they have brought to their task a patience in research, an energy of documentation, and an ingenuity in disengaging the central thread which must arouse our respect if not our emulation.

The present work is not a history of fashion. It is both less and much more. It is a history of feminine elegance, almost a history of the mechanism of seduction, from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day. It is based on the theory that elegance has always an erotic motive, and its method is an accumulation of examples, a wealth of evidence drawn from the lives of Mme de Pompadour, Mme du Barry, Marie-Antoinette, Pauline Bonaparte, Lola Montez, Cora Pearl, and a host of less well-known women who have been the queens of elegance and the directors of fashion.

That our authoress is qualified for the task she has set herself is evidenced by the list of her published works. She has studied the Court of Louis XIV and that of Napoleon; she has edited the Emperor's love-letters; she has translated the memoirs of Mme de Staël and those of Catherine II, Empress of Russia; she has published the memoirs of the

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Countess Kilmannsegge and those of the Dashkoff; she has written the lives of Mme de Pompadour, Queen Louisa, and Liselotte of the Palatinate; and she has translated the life of King Edward VII, by Sir Sidney Lee.

The present work, while perhaps not her *magnum opus*, quite obviously enshrines the distilled elixir of her philosophy. It is the central hall of her thought, to which all her other books are but outbuildings. They may, indeed, be considered as so many *pièces justificatives* for the present study of feminine elegance.

To the wise this is no trifling subject, for although the history of feminine elegance and the history of culture are not precisely the same thing, their courses are curiously parallel. It is useless for Puritans of every period to sigh for the simple, uncorrupted manners of their fathers. Every age has enjoyed what luxury it could, and the degree of its luxury has been, almost always, the measure of its civilization.

We need not here pause to investigate the moral questions involved; whether civilization in itself be good or bad is beside the point. We shall have done something to clear the ground if we can arrive at a satisfactory definition of elegance. What is this magical quality which some quite ugly women are able to make use of to enslave the world? What force lies in an inch more or an inch less of chiffon, in a waistline now high, now low, in complexions healthily brown or delicately pale, in legs long or short, in thighs massive or slender, in bosoms boyish or imperial?

The consideration of the smallest freak of fashion lands us inevitably into the discussion of the profoundest problems of human nature, into the obscurest corners of the history of social evolution.

Clothes, like the skins of animals, serve a double and somewhat inconsistent purpose. They are both self-protective and self-assertive. They serve to merge the individual in his environment, and are the most potent weapons of the recurrent

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parade of love. The tiger in the jungle and the broker in the City both assume the colour of their surroundings ; while the brightness and beauty of fashion find their echo in the mating season of birds.

The biologist from a fragment of bone can reconstruct the entire primeval beast ; the student of clothes and the accessories that go with them, from the broken handle of a fan, from a cameo or a shoe-buckle, can build up a convincing picture of a bygone age. Josephine's Egyptian brooches enshrine the Oriental ambitions of Napoleon ; the enamelled surface of a Rococo snuff-box reflects the entire age of Louis XV ; the jointed umbrella of an early Victorian lady implies a complete attitude to life. These things are more than relics—they are symbols, and the crinoline is as much a monument as the Albert Memorial.

In describing these monuments and those who made them our authoress displays an admirable freedom from sentimentality, and those who wish to inhale the perfume of a quaint and faded charm while contemplating the gowns of our great-grandmothers had better read no further. To say that she has no illusions would be grotesquely to understate the case. Her cynicisms are certitudes, and, although she never mentions his name, the simple philosophy of Dr Freud—that everything boils down to sex—is part of the permanent background of her mind. Even the rubber balls with which people play at the seaside are only a means of becoming acquainted with strangers—a preliminary instrument of seduction.

By the nature of the case she is excluded from considering all those women in every age who make little or no pretension to elegance, but I am not quite sure that even with elegant women life—and love—is quite so simple.

Fashion is a very complex thing. Its mainspring, no doubt, is seduction, but not its constant preoccupation. Its laws are infinitely obscure ; one is almost forced back on the mystical

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notion that there lies some mysterious satisfaction in being in harmony with the spirit of one's age. In any period those are happiest who adapt themselves most completely to their surroundings, and woman is marvellously adaptable. She is soft and coquettish in the age of Greuze, Olympian in 1800, languishing in 1840, mysteriously medieval with the Pre-Raphaelites, perverse with the "naughty nineties," and boyish and athletic in the period which is just passing away.

Art has been defined as "exaggeration *à propos*," and the artist is he who knows what to exaggerate. To know this beforehand is not so easy as it afterward seems, for it implies an exact and instinctive vision of what are indeed the essential lines. In the same way elegance, or so it seems to me, is essentially exaggeration *à propos*, and its successful practice is as instinctive in its operation and as magical in its effects as the creation of a work of art.

The creation of fashion is now highly organized and commercialized; none the less the most skilful of Paris dress-makers can do no more than trim their sails to the prevailing wind. In 1928 they laboured in vain to bring in long skirts for evening dresses; in 1931 they laboured in vain who tried to keep them out. A hundred years hence grave historians will illustrate their account of the gradual subsidence of post-War hysteria by pointing to the mere feminine modes which prevailed in the early nineteen-thirties. They will be justified, no doubt, but who can prophesy these things? The historical method is, after all, the safe one, and that method our authoress has unflinchingly pursued. Nor is she being irrelevant when she pauses over the details of her heroines' private lives, for these things are an essential part of a very complex problem. There is nothing which is more surely part of ourselves than the *décor* of our lives. Even the much ridiculed male attire of the present day is expressive to the ultimate degree. It is industrialism modified by sport, just as the costume of an eighteenth-century nobleman represented

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gallantry controlled by etiquette, with relics of feudalism still clanking by his side. The costume of a period, even its male costume, is the mirror of the soul. How much more, then, must feminine costume, with its perpetual fluidity, express? "One impulse from a vernal wood," sang Wordsworth:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Tennyson expressed more or less the same sentiments concerning the "flower in the crannied wall." A more urban observer might, with equal justice, pick up from a woman's dressing-table, or from the floor of her bedroom, no matter what trifle. It would tell him more of woman than most of the sages can; and if it told him of woman it would tell him also of man, for man in every age has created woman in the image of his own desire. It is false flattery of women to pretend that this is not so, and our authoress, at least, does not question it. Woman is the mould into which the spirit of the age pours itself, and to those with any sense of history no detail of the resulting symbolic statue is without importance. To the true philosopher there are no trivialities.

The task of translating such a work as this presents certain peculiar difficulties. The style is obviously not the main consideration. To seize its every *nuance*, to reproduce its rhythm—I will not insult our authoress by saying that it would not be worth the pains, but it would certainly be beside the point. It is the subject that is important, and this I have tried to present as simply as possible.

Where our authoress quotes from the works of French or English authorities I have, wherever possible, translated or transcribed the passages in question anew. Where dates would seem to make the narrative clearer I have inserted them, and where she uses of England phrases more suitable to the description of life on the Continent I have modified or

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suppressed them. Where, in some minor points, I have been unable to endorse her conclusions I have indicated my disagreement in a footnote. But, before leaving the work to the judgment of the public, there is one further point which remains to be made.

The German edition of the present book has scarcely been in print more than long enough for the conscientious translator to perform his task, yet certain strange things have already happened of which the book takes no notice. Those who write of fashion should never use the word 'now.' Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears away nothing so quickly as the modes of yester-year, and the life of conclusions based upon the shortness of women's skirts may prove even shorter than they. The clear-cut generalizations of a year ago find themselves entangled in a new flounce or a revived falbala. In a word, we are at the beginning of the Grand Reaction, the commencement of what threatens to be a new Victorianism. Who will be so hardy, in the light of recent fashions, to deny that this is possible?

The ladies of 1800, going about in their single garment of transparent muslin, with short hair and few prejudices, rejoicing in the French Revolution and fancying themselves emancipated, little recked of the age of prudery which was to come after them. They did not foresee that, in thirty years' time, the stays which they had cast off so joyfully would be claspings unmercifully the delicate bodies of their daughters, and that the voluminous skirts which they had discarded would be enfolding the limbs of the next generation in yet more ample folds. Perhaps when the time came they did not care. Rebellious daughters are apt to make stern mothers, and one fortunate generation in three seems to enjoy both the delights of an independent youth and the pleasures of a dictatorial old age.

Napoleon himself forgot that he had been a Revolutionary, and the reaction which he set on foot was only confirmed and

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strengthened by the restoration of the Bourbons. Once more a Louis ascended the throne of France, and prudery resumed control of feminine fashions. From the era of mock modesty which ensued the release is recent enough to be remembered by all but the youngest of us. It was not only our grandmothers, but our mothers too, who had taper waists, and had to lift their skirts before crossing the street. The knee-long garments of yesterday are less than a decade old.

Shall we too grow prudish, delicate, and shrinking? Shall we faint upon sofas, and sacrifice to the Moloch Modesty even the fruits of our own common sense?

One thing, and one alone, may save us: sport, especially tennis. The champions of the Centre Court are not in the least likely to revert to ankle-length skirts: they are much more likely to take to shorts or bathing costumes. There may, indeed, develop in women's dress something very similar to the evolution of male attire—a growing divergence between ordinary clothes and those worn on ceremonial occasions. A definite type of evening dress for women, sharply differentiated from a much simpler day dress, is not at all unlikely.

The future of modes and manners is uncertain, but of one thing we may be sure—that human nature will remain very much the same as it has been during the period covered by the present volume. The lesson of history—if it has a lesson—is that “youth will be served.” The common sense of mankind will always insist upon a reasonable opportunity for the satisfaction of common appetites, and he who would deny this—be he Savonarola or Robespierre—is running his head against a brick wall. The frivolity of the human race is incurable, for it is the outward manifestation of the most deep-rooted of all instincts, and he who succeeds in abolishing it will be assisting at the death of the world.

J. L.

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CHAPTER I

MME DE POMPADOUR

WHEN we turn our minds to the Rococo period we seem to see a magic land of dazzling, exquisite beauty. We who live in this bustling, mechanical, machine-ridden age cannot but be seized with a feeling of envy for those who lived in that pleasant period, a period which seems to have been devoted entirely to the enjoyment of life. Charming, coquettish women, elegant, gallant men lived (or so we imagine) in this paradise, without any cares but those of the body, and without any troubles but those of the heart. Happy people perpetually gathered on smooth, cultivated lawns, as in the pictures of Watteau, and making ready to embark for Cythera. Indeed, the wealthy classes, in France at least, did live on a kind of enchanted island, where the only employment was the pursuit of pleasure and the only goddess the Goddess of Love. And their island was not far away in some uncharted sea, but at hand, at home—the Ile de France!

The mere phrase *dix-huitième siècle* conjures up a vision of a veritable paradise on earth; and no matter how far such a picture may be from reality, it has imposed itself ineffaceably upon the imagination of the world. Those courtly gallants, their velvet and silk clothes bedecked with diamonds, feathers, and gold, and those ethereal ladies, in mythological costumes, in charmingly seductive *négligés*, in piquant *déshabillés*, seem to have lived solely for enjoyment and sensuality. They are themselves mythological, and for them life had no burdens, no pains, no sorrows, but was one perpetual fairy-tale of pastoral pleasures, of voluptuous dances, of country picnics,

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of brilliant balls, and of gallant adventures. The Rococo men and women lived in rich palaces with boudoirs built for coquetry; they walked in splendid parks with alleys planned for assignation; they slept in soft, silk beds that had been made for love. In short, they had but one aim—to enjoy life, and, in retrospect at least, they seem to have succeeded.

The Rococo period, which stretches from the death of Louis XIV to the accession of Louis XVI, was one long hymn of praise to pagan love, an endless glorification of the pleasures of the senses, an unceasing incense offered at the shrine of woman. And women themselves were as eager as men to take advantage of the prevailing laxity of morals.

The most typical representative of the elegant and gallant women of the period was Mme de Pompadour, whose name is inalienably associated with the epithet Rococo. The long reign of this extremely clever courtesan was the Golden Age of elegance, fashion, frivolity, and light-heartedness, but no less of the fine arts. No other mistress of a king, and indeed very few of her sex at all, has possessed the Pompadour's fine creative taste, coupled as it was with a fertile imagination and no mean talents. Her whole personality bore the stamp of the elegance of the period. She was a born voluptuary who shrank from no gratification of her desires; and when she became the mistress of the pleasure-seeking King, and could dip at will into the State coffers and the private purse of Louis XV, her passion for spending knew no bounds. But so creative was the mind of the Pompadour that she has left her mark on everything she touched.

It is astonishing how often in the surviving literature of the period the name of Pompadour recurs, associated with some work of art or some product of the age. Even to-day a small lady's bag is known by the name of Louis XV's favourite. It is true that no small part of her influence was due to the flunkeyism and snobbery of the Court, which

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delighted to use the name of the different mistresses of the King to add glamour and attraction to every object of luxury. Parisians, more than the citizens of any other capital, are prone to make an idol of the new and fashionable; Casanova observed this characteristic on his first visit to Paris. He expressed his surprise to a friend that one particular snuff-shop was besieged, and that everybody insisted on buying snuff there and there only. It was not because the snuff there was better than anywhere else, but because a woman of fashion, the Duchesse de Chartres, had made the shop fashionable, by the simple process of ordering her carriage to be pulled up there once or twice to have her snuff-box filled. Every snuff-taker in Paris crowded into the shop to follow her example, and the lucky tradesman made a fortune. But it was not mere snobbery which brought everything the Pompadour adopted into fashion. This woman possessed a gift which is to be found not only among ladies of high rank or of any particular culture, but as often among women and girls in a very simple station—the gift of choosing her own clothing and furniture with singularly good taste. In her hands a mere nothing became a work of art. A little piece of material or a ribbon was sufficient to make a ravishing bow, placed in the very spot where it would be most attractive. This enchantress of good taste laid a spell on all her contemporaries. The time came when everything the Marquise approved of was designated *à la Pompadour*.

She was, herself, not the slave of fashion, but its queen. Her clothes were not mere fashionable caprices, but the very patterns of real elegance and good taste. Every *toilette* she wore was her own creation; and it was not only by the splendour and extravagance of her costumes that she commanded admiration, but by her ability to adapt any fashion to her own individuality. She seldom allowed vanity to carry her away, and never strove to make an effect by wearing some dress which might be the fashion but which did not suit her.

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She was always herself, always new, always creative. She appeared at the King's levees, to which all the courtiers were admitted, in a fascinating morning robe of her own invention, which set off to perfection the lines of her charming figure—and soon everybody wore *déshabillé à la Pompadour*. *Négligés* were, in the eighteenth century, adopted frankly as instruments of seduction, and Mme de Pompadour and her elegant contemporaries expended the utmost care on these seemingly careless *toilettes*. The delicacy and care which went to the making of these *négligés* can be gathered from the many descriptions which have come down to us of the levees of aristocratic ladies and of famous courtesans.

The toilet of a woman of fashion was an elaborate business, occupying the greater part of her day. But as women wanted to see something of their friends, they invited them to be present at their levees, and by their company help to while away the long hours at the dressing-table. Moreover, the custom gave the elegant woman an excellent opportunity for displaying her charms, one by one, to her admirers; and this public toilet of the eighteenth century was fashionable in high society even in comparatively prudish England. At the levees of a great number of the influential ladies of the Court and of famous courtesans, such as the Pompadour and her predecessors, the talk was often political. They were attended by ministers, councillors, and foreign ambassadors. The young General Wolfe visited the King's mistress at her toilet-table and discussed the situation in Canada. At other times the conversation would be of the latest products of literature and art. But as a rule the levees were given over to gallantry and love-making. Frequent flirtations took place, not always confined to words and glances. The tone of the levee varied with the temperament of the lady and her friends, and while some were merely frivolous, others were frankly sensual. The Pompadour was one of the cleverest women of her time, and readily produced whatever atmosphere she



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desired. At her levees she was capable of advising ministers, disposing of high diplomatic posts, and sending out *lettres de cachet* from her boudoir, while all the time inflaming the senses of the King and her other admirers. She loved to prolong her levees as much as possible, trying on every imaginable *négligé*, Court dress, shoe, slipper, stocking, and garter. Every physical charm was brought into play in turn, for she was a true child of her period, and professed the cult of her own beauty. Her shoulders, her arms—she had beautifully shaped arms, which even drew comment from Marie Leszczyńska—her neck, her enchanting little foot, her slim legs—each physical perfection added to the desired effect. Powder made her skin like marble, robbing it of the warm, bright colours of life; so she wore very little. To have her hair dressed she would sit in a cloud of fragrant lace; then, with a sudden gesture, she would throw everything on one side, and swathe her limbs in some new enhancement of her beauty. The eyes of the men rested in admiration, and those of the few women present in curiosity, on this capricious ruler of elegance; but every woman observed carefully all the details of her clothes in order to copy them, until at last there was scarcely a single object, not a garment, not a piece of furniture, that was not *à la Pompadour*. Toilet requisites, ribbons, fans, bags, dresses, cloaks, carriages, tables, chairs, beds, cupboards, table utensils, even tooth-picks, bore her name. A woman could have no pretensions to *chic* unless her clothes were *à la Pompadour*, her furniture *à la Pompadour*, unless she drove, rode, conversed, and occupied herself *à la Pompadour*.

It was not only the furniture of her *salon*, her boudoir, and her bedroom which set the fashion—the tone that prevailed in her rooms was imitated too. For to the ladies of the Rococo period the most important rooms in the house were the intimate rooms: the bedroom and the dressing-room. At that time, when marriage in the higher classes of society

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was often a mere pretence, when the whole life of the woman of fashion was given up to flirtation and sensuality, the bedrooms of married couples were naturally placed as far apart as possible, not in order to preserve the freshness of married life, but to allow the partners freedom to pursue their adventures. A husband who asked to share his wife's bedroom would have been laughed at. He was not even present at his wife's levee. In the first place, he was usually engaged elsewhere; in the second place, his presence would have been a disturbing element. The taste of the period did not require that one should be home-loving and respectable—still less was it desirable to seem so. Even the privileges of a lover were strictly limited by his mistress, for eighteenth-century ladies liked variety. Even the gallant Duc de Lauzun, who was a great favourite with ladies, did not succeed in establishing a monopoly. He was deeply hurt when the beautiful Lady Barrymore, who lived for a time at the French Court, persisted in sharing her favours with him and with the young Comte d'Artois. When Lauzun found he had been betrayed and began to upbraid her she replied in the real Rococo spirit: "You are wrong to give me up, Lauzun. I like you. You appeal to my taste. I love you very much, but I love my freedom more dearly even than you. I will not sacrifice myself to your ill-temper, nor allow my lover to be as jealous, peevish, and obstinate as a husband. . . . Do not let us quarrel about so unimportant a matter, Lauzun." And as he kissed her she whispered: "I will not make any sacrifices. I shall keep both the Comte d'Artois and you." Such was the eighteenth-century woman's attitude to love.

It goes without saying that these women furnished their bedrooms, in which they spent most of the day, with the utmost artistry and luxury. Their first concern was the bed. It occupied the greatest space in the room, and the greatest care was lavished upon it as the veritable temple of love. In the words of Curt Moreck, it was "the spirit of voluptuousness

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which, as though by magic, created in the bedroom of the eighteenth-century lady, out of delicate woodwork and a cloud of silk, lace, and ostrich feathers, the shell-like bed of love, placing a mirror in the draperies at the back and in the ceiling of the canopy," so that the beauty of the sleeper might be multiplied. Of all the painters of the period it was Fragonard who depicted most successfully the seductive grace of the woman in bed, and from the vogue of his pictures we can guess the leading part that was played in the love life of the eighteenth century by this most intimate of all articles of furniture, and the personal charm which the women even of the *bourgeoisie* were able to give to their bedrooms. How much more important it must have been for the declared courtesans and the frivolous ladies of the Court and of high society to make of their bedrooms a seductive frame for their half-naked beauty. Mme de Pompadour was past mistress in this art.

To her great disappointment, however, she had early to experience the growing indifference of the King. In spite of everything, when scarcely a year had passed, he ceased to find with her any physical pleasure. The rumour began to spread at Court that she would soon be sent away, that the King was bored even with her. She trembled at the thought that she would have to forfeit, so early in her career, her position, so hardly won, of *maîtresse en titre*, and all the glamour and wealth that accompanied it. She blamed her temperament, for she was by nature cold, and had always had to force herself to fulfil the duties of a lover. She had never been sensual: she had always been ambitious. She would have preferred to do as Marie Leszczyńska did, and bolt her door when the King came and knocked at night; but she was no queen by right, and every day she pondered all possible means of adapting her physical temperament to that of the King. The fear of losing him altogether drove her to the use of aphrodisiacs. At first she only had her food very highly seasoned. At

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breakfast she drank several cups of vanilla chocolate, flavoured with ambergris. At midday she ate highly seasoned soups and a quantity of truffles, and finally, in despair, she took a so-called love-potion prescribed by some quack. In this respect also she was a true child of her period, and believed, as did every one else, in magic cures and secret medicines, unmindful of the bad effect on her health which they were bound to have. The taking of love-potions and love-pills was an almost universal practice among these creatures of pleasure, for their chief object was to keep themselves as long as possible in a state of erotic excitement. Particularly favoured were the very dangerous aphrodisiac poisons, such as cantharides, which was mixed in food or eaten in the form of sweetmeats. The perpetual round of new adventures, the endless nights devoted to passion, the little time which their life left them in which to recuperate, made recourse to such drugs almost inevitable.

It follows naturally that stimulating dainties of all kinds were among the favourite dishes at an eighteenth-century dinner-table, particularly oysters, fish, crabs, artichokes, truffles, turtles, and highly spiced ragouts, and there was no lack of these dainties at the banquets of Louis XIV and Louis XV. As many as eighty courses were sometimes served at a single meal, and these were prepared with all the delicacy of the finest culinary art. Yet even the addition of the choicest wines did not supply the necessary stimulus for the senses, and the unfortunate creatures of pleasure were compelled to resort to secret medicines and to love-potions. It is hardly necessary to remark that the chief benefit from these elixirs was reaped by their inventors and retailers. Certainly Mme de Pompadour's passion was not enhanced thereby. She remained passive and cold, and the King consoled himself—with the complaisant assistance of his favourite—with young girls brought to a house in the deer park.

The Pompadour was as superstitious as all the other ladies



THE TOILET OF VENUS

*Colour-print by J.-F. Janinet after F. Boucher
About 1760*

MME DE POMPADOUR

of the eighteenth century, and as ready as they to fall into the hands of quacks. Casanova has left an entertaining account of the frauds he practised both in Venice and in Paris, and of how he imposed not only on the ignorant, but on the equally credulous grand ladies of the Court who came to him for assistance. And Casanova was an amateur in quackery compared with Cagliostro and others like him.

But neither magic cures, nor elixirs, nor the skill of Casanova availed the Pompadour, and the most charming, the most beautiful, and the most accomplished woman in France had very early to learn the lesson of the transitoriness of all beauty. At the age of thirty-five her complexion, once so dazzling, was pale and faded. Her charming figure, the tender curves of her breasts and shoulders, had fallen away and become angular, and she had to use the strongest cosmetics in order to hide the wrinkles and blemishes with which premature age was disfiguring her face. The common French practice of using rouge and powder was very convenient for her, but she seems to have carried its use too far, for contemporary chronicles say that it was almost impossible to recognize her features under the thick layer of rouge. One keen observer of the manners of the period wrote that at the Court of Louis XV, when Mme Pompadour was the leader of fashion, the "stupid habit of rouging" had produced such a ridiculous similarity between the ladies that it was difficult to distinguish one from another. So bright was the red on their cheeks that they might have been taken for furies on the point of executing a wild dance. "And," continues this severe critic, "they did not only obliterate their features by this means, but they quenched every feeling of desire in men, whose one wish was to flee from them."

This opinion, however, does not seem to have been shared by all men, for most of these painted ladies had the greatest success, and certainly could not complain that their admirers avoided them. Casanova too was of opinion that at the time

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of Louis XV the ladies of the Court used rather too much rouge, but he liked it. He writes :

The charm of these painted faces lies in the carelessness with which the ladies redden their cheeks. They have no wish that the colour should seem natural. It is put on to please the eye, for it gives an illusion of sensual excitement which promises unusual pleasure amid positive orgies of love.

In violent contrast to the flaming red cheeks was the dead white of the rest of the face, enhanced by the blackness of the patches worn by women throughout the century. The passion for 'make-up' was universal, and in no century was so much powder and rouge used as in the eighteenth. Men, as well as women and children, applied it to their faces, as if by its use they might put a check on advancing years. Women had succeeded in abolishing time, for the powdering of the hair by young and old alike obliterated the differences of age. Many a woman was more successful than the Pompadour in reducing her apparent age at least ten years by means of cosmetics, but perhaps the Marquise, in her anxiety to keep her fading youth, overdid her applications of rouge.

Yet this woman, who even in her heyday possessed only a hothouse beauty, had something throughout her life which was infinitely more important. Her personality was unconquerable, her zest for life unextinguished. When she appeared, during the last period of her reign, in the King's *salon* or at Court festivities, where many young, beautiful, and elegant women were present, and where she might well have feared competition, all eyes centred on her, although she was young and beautiful no longer. It is true that, in spite of all her despairing efforts, the decline of her charms was obvious enough, but her general appearance and bearing seemed to command: "Look at me! Here I am!" It was her confidence in her own personality and authority which gave her such self-possession. She had never in her life been shy or diffident, and her unconquerable spirit alone had guided her

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through all the storms of life. At the outset youth and beauty had assisted her, and, when the time came, she was able to replace these two gifts of nature not only by art and cosmetics, but by intelligence, influence, and power. She was no ordinary woman, and no commonplace courtesan. She fought to the end, and would never surrender an inch of what she had won. Even on her death-bed her chief thought was for her beauty. She hoped, even then, that the world might not be allowed to see her decline. As her last hour approached and the priest, who had given her the last sacrament, was about to take leave of her and go, she called to him, smiling: "Wait a moment, Father—we will go together!" Then she quickly put a little rouge on her cheeks, to hide the deathly pallor of her face, and fell asleep. A few hours later she was dead.

CHAPTER II

THE DRESS SALONS OF PARIS

SINCE the eighteenth century the Parisienne has been the arbiter of taste and elegance for almost the whole world. Her *coiffure*, her ornaments, her gowns, the ideas which she embodies in her dressmaking and millinery, her coquetties, and her caprices have been, and still are, the model for every civilized woman. Her wardrobe is a shrine and her dressing-table an altar on which she burns incense to the god of fashion. Dress is the visible raiment of elegance, and the eighteenth century was, *par excellence*, the period of luxury in clothes. As Fuchs says, it was

the solution of the problem of the age to resolve the harmonious unity of the female body and to display its individual charms, particularly the breasts, the thighs, and the hips. . . . The sensual images of an earlier age [the Renaissance] were naked, but now they are always draped or half-clothed.

The woman of the eighteenth century did not achieve her effects by healthy physical beauty, but by the accentuation and display of all the individual charms of her person. Yet even in the eroticism of her method of dress she was more refined than the woman of the Renaissance was in her nakedness. It has been said that the lady of the Rococo period offered her charms to the male piecemeal, giving him only a little at a time. Maybe she would veil her well-corseted bosom with a zephyr-like kerchief, which she would either accidentally or intentionally loosen and push on one side; or maybe, stepping into her chair or her carriage, or mounting a staircase, by a graceful tilt of her wide hoop, she would

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display a slim leg or a dainty foot in a high-heeled shoe. But the kerchief was the most useful aid to feminine coquetry, and every woman had her own way of adapting it to her purpose. Even the little milliners and shop-girls—indeed, they above all—understood its use. It could be laid modestly round the shoulders, tantalizingly hiding the scarcely developed form, or, at a given moment—as though by chance—it could be loosened a little, to give the eyes of an admirer a glimpse of the beauties it hid. These girls had a natural talent for offering everything in the smallest doses. Furthermore, the kerchief permitted the neck of the bodice underneath to be even more cut away, so that almost the whole bosom was exposed. In the street or in society it served to hide what might be too much exposed, although it was often made of so flimsy a material that the contours beneath could be easily discerned. In the intimate hours spent with a lover, or with one about to be a lover, it was an unrivalled banner of conquest—a graceful weapon of coquetry which never failed in its effect. How often must these kerchiefs have been loosened in tender love, or torn away in the excitement of passion!

The elegance of the eighteenth century, however, was very superficial, in spite of costly materials, delicate laces, flowers, garlands, and jewellery. Very little value was attached to what could not be seen. The wonderful brocade gowns, real works of art in their cut and style, were lined with coarse linen and sewn with thick hempen thread, so that bulky coarse seams resulted. The skin of the Rococo lady cannot have been very sensitive. The garments of the period which are preserved in museums and collections make one wonder, if one observes them closely, how these delicate creatures could have borne on their bodies such heavy, clumsily sewn dresses, not to speak of the masses of whalebone and wire frames, the heavy armour-like corsets which, in comparison with the whalebone cases of the end of the nineteenth

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century, were veritable coats of mail. The eighteenth-century lady knew nothing of the dainty underwear of later periods, but she expended the most extravagant fantasy in the creation of the *négligé*, which she wore in the morning in bed or before her dressing-table. Then she was always draped in a cloud of fragrance and lace, and many women were better dressed in *déshabillé* than in their Society gowns.

The creators of all this, the little milliners, seamstresses, and shop-girls, who designed and made up these marvels of elegance, attained in the eighteenth century to something approaching genius. A contemporary calls them "aristocrats among the Parisian work-girls," with particular reference to the milliners, who, in those days, made not only hats, but almost everything else appertaining to the toilet of an elegant woman. They themselves often had better taste, and would have known better how to wear the beautiful things they made, had they possessed the means to buy them, than many a lady of the grand world, many an actress or courtesan who no longer had youth at her disposal to set off her charms. But even without wealth, and in spite of their small means, they were elegant, for they possessed taste and skill and the vanity to set them both at work.

An eighteenth-century dress *salon* was admirably adapted to train its work-girls in all the arts of coquetry. Most of them came from the provinces to Paris, and brought with them not only youth, but innocence. They were pretty, care-free, high-spirited, and fond of clothes, and the millinery shop or the work-room represented for them the height of refinement. A shop of that kind was an irresistible attraction for their vanity, and before long every little Breton girl or village maid from Picardy had learned to dress and move about like a Parisienne. In constant contact with the elegant ladies of Society and the *demi-monde*, they found their innate love of luxury growing daily. Men too frequented these fashion *salons*. The eighteenth-century gentleman liked to purchase



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there some costly trifle for his wife or his mistress ; it was not always, however, to buy lace that he entered the *salon*, but often merely to seek adventure among the pretty shop-girls and milliners. Many of the dress *salons* were acknowledged places of rendezvous, and their employees, in general, did not need much persuading. It did not take long to make out of the shy and modest provincial girl a very elegant Parisian coquette.

The distinguished gentlemen among their *clientèle* did not fail to arouse a lively interest in the young dressmakers. Their profession enabled them to gain experience very quickly in the arts which women are accustomed to employ to attract men, for the young creatures spent most of their day in endeavouring to beautify their clients' ladies. Sometimes a young girl snatched from a convent would have to be initiated into the art of pleasing. With the aid of beautiful clothes, seductive *négligés*, and everything belonging to the luxurious equipment of a woman of the eighteenth century, she would be prepared for her lover—sometimes even for a husband ; and the milliner, with her good taste and her deft fingers, would perform the miracle. Another time it might be a young married woman needing to be adorned. Maybe she was to be presented at Court, and hoped to strike a dart into the bosom of the king himself. In any case, her charms had to be displayed to the best advantage.

But in the main the chief customers of the work-girls in such shops were actresses, singers, dancers, and the famous courtesans, who perhaps were once, like themselves, serving customers and sewing with busy fingers the seams of dainty *toilettes* for other women. Now they possessed all these marvellous things themselves, not to speak of carriages, horses, sedan chairs, houses, and servants. One of these lovely ladies would come with her lover to the dress *salon*. Costly trifles are brought out. Nothing seems good enough for the lady, her fancies are hard to satisfy, while the eyes of the young

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milliner who is serving her rest with admiration on the elegant cavalier, generous and sometimes even young and handsome. A glance in the mirror tells her that these things would become her youthful beauty as well as, perhaps better than, this woman's; and as soon as the customer is gone and the *patronne* has retired to her own room or has disappeared into the workshop, the little girl in the shop holds, with flushed cheeks, a sort of fashion parade of her own. She tries on the costly brocades, the dainty muslins, the lovely soft silks, tries the effect of one hat and then another, puts a flower here and a bow there, and is highly contented with the result. But with a sigh of resignation she lays everything away in its box. She may only sell or work at these things; she cannot possess them herself. Her business is to satisfy the wishes of the customers, and she succeeds in this with an almost unexampled virtuosity. And in the background her own beauty blooms ever more freshly. She even arouses the curiosity of the old and the young fops who saunter in front of the windows of the dress *salon*—which is situated in the busiest part of the Palais-Royal—and ogle through the glass the young girls who are busy within. The merry little things, in their short hooped skirts with *paniers*, with their rosy bare arms and adolescent bosoms under their lightly fastened kerchiefs, smile at them from blue and brown eyes, and hum to themselves as they ply their needles with busy fingers.

It is well known that many noblemen of the eighteenth century found their mistresses among these light-hearted girls. The Duc de Richelieu, the dissolute Duc de Chartres, the gallant Lauzun, Artois, and many others were assiduous customers at the dress *salons*, and the Duc de Richelieu had a whole series of gallant adventures with little milliners, dressmakers, and mannequins. It was not difficult to make their acquaintance, and, as a rule, they were disposed to be obliging. Their lovers met them after the shop was closed, or on Sundays, in the Palais-Royal or in the Tuileries gardens.

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With light steps and coquettish airs they walked past the men who came to meet them, but turned back when they were called. They were not always beautiful, but they were all young, good-tempered, lively, and care-free—all qualities prized by a gallant. Their youth was their greatest attraction for the young bloods who came to seek their pleasure among them.

Many of these young ladies, however, were sharply watched by their masters, not on moral grounds, but purely from a business point of view. It was usual for the girls to live in the house of, and be fed and clothed by, their employer. They were never allowed to spend a night away from the house without permission, unless it was to the particular interest of the owner of the *salon* to allow some rich and honoured customer to take a young work-girl away with him and make her, for a time at least, one of the ruling queens of elegance.

Sometimes the girls resisted the efforts of rich young men to seduce them from a life of honest labour, but their permission was not always asked. If necessary, the girls were taken by force, with the help of some devoted and wily servant, to one of the notorious *petites maisons* owned by nearly every gallant of the eighteenth century. Yet even the Duc de Chartres, to whom a number of such abductions were attributed, did not always succeed in his violent measures. He had been married young, and had a charming if frivolous wife, but the seductive grace of a pretty young girl from Picardy, whom he had seen in the fashion *salon* of Mlle Fergel, took his fancy and whetted his appetite. Her name was Rose, and she often came to the Palais-Royal to fit on gowns and hats for the young Duchesse. On each occasion the Duc was present. He played the lover, gave her notes, and made proposals, but all to no purpose. Rose was determined to preserve her virtue and good name. Even the most lavish promises and the offer of rich gifts had no effect. Then

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one day the valet of the Duc de Chartres appeared at Mlle Forgel's, with a request that the little milliner from Picardy should at last accede to the proposals of his master. He promised to keep her just as splendidly as his present mistress, the actress Duthé; she should have everything she desired—carriages, horses, servants, diamonds, pearls, and dresses; but nothing persuaded Rose to yield her virtue. Chartres was in despair, and his wife laughed at his defeat, for she knew all about his peccadilloes, and consoled herself in the usual way with others. It would have been a reflection on her good taste to have played the jealous wife, and she would have forfeited her reputation as a woman of the world had she loved her young husband so much as to countenance no rival. She too was a child of her period, and just as much influenced by the frivolity of the century as her husband. It would have been unfashionable and out-of-date to be in love with one's husband for more than three months; it was the fashion to mock at the mere possibility of a happy marriage. One Gaston Maugras tells a story of a young and pretty woman who was made very unhappy by the prevailing frivolity, for she loved her husband only. One day, when she was in the *salon* of the Duc de Choiseul, and sitting sadly in a corner, because she could not bear the cynicism of the company, an old priest came up to her and said: "Madame, do not be sad. You are pretty, and that in itself is a crime. That you might be forgiven, but if you want to have a peaceful life you must hide your love for your husband better. Married love is the one thing that will not be tolerated here." The Duchesse de Chartres did not love her husband, and he did not love her. It was rumoured that he was very brutal, the coarsest and the most brutal lover in the whole of Paris. He was a verbal sadist, and made use of the coarsest and most shameless language in the tenderest *tête-à-tête*. Rose had no desire to be made the object of so strange a passion, and the Duc was compelled to resort to violence. The little *midinette* should



THE BATH

*Colour-print by N.-F. Regnault after P.-A. Baudouin
About 1775*

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be kidnapped, and in one of his country houses she should be bent to his will. He talked all this over with several intimate friends as dissolute as himself—Conflans, Louvois, d'Entraigues. But the Duc's valet had compassion on the little girl, and he disclosed to her the plot and advised her to be on her guard.

Rose made a bold resolution. The village girl from Picardy was both clever and courageous.

A few weeks later she was sent again to the Palais-Royal with gowns and hats, this time for one of the ladies of the Court, the Duchesse d'Usson. Shortly after her arrival the Duc de Chartres was announced to the Duchesse. He had not yet given up his struggle for possession of the girl.

As etiquette demanded, the Duchesse rose from her chair to greet his Royal Highness at the door, but the Duc bade her be seated again. Without appearing to notice Rose, he sat down beside Mme d'Usson and chatted with her as though no one else were in the room. Suddenly the little milliner drew up a chair and seated herself, quite unabashed, beside the Duc. The Duchesse did not know what to make of it. She was embarrassed, and looked at the young girl significantly, but Rose did not stir. Then Mme d'Usson said impatiently:

"Mademoiselle, you forget that you are in the presence of his Royal Highness!"

"Oh, no, madame, I certainly did not forget it!"

"Well, then, why are you behaving in this way?"

"Oh, Madame la Duchesse does not know that if I wished I could this very night become the Duchesse de Chartres?"

The Duc bit his lip, but said nothing.

The Duchesse was amazed, and seemed to expect an explanation from him: but, without giving him time to speak, Rose continued calmly:

"Yes, madame. I have been offered everything that could tempt and seduce a young girl, and because I have refused a

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plot has been made to kidnap me. So, madame, if one day your charming hats or one of your gowns is not delivered, or if, madame, you should hear that little Rose has disappeared from Mademoiselle Forgel's dress *salon*, you will only have to ask his Royal Highness. He will know where she is."

"What do you say to this, my lord?"

"I think," said the Prince, "that there is no choice when it is a question of quelling such a charming rebel."

Rose turned again to the Duchesse. "Madame, you must admit," said she, "that a woman who is to have a prince for a lover, who is to share the most intimate hours of her life with him, may also be on familiar terms with him in public. My lord must not forget who he is, and I shall always remember the great difference which exists between him and me."

From that time he left her in peace, but as he rose to leave the room, somewhat piqued, he hissed in her ear as he passed her: "Serpent!"

This little Parisian milliner, however, was an exception in her class and in her period. As a rule, men of the world, or *roués*, as (following the example of the Duc de Richelieu) they liked to call themselves, did not have any difficulty in enticing the women and girls they fancied to their night quarters, their *petites maisons*, or their *châteaux*. And if the girls did not come willingly, they were as ready to use force as the Duc de Chartres.

The Duc d'Orléans, the son of Liselotte, was also notorious for this high-handed behaviour. The scene of his orgies was the Palais-Royal. He was not particular in his choice—dancers, ballet-girls, prostitutes, milliners and seamstresses, famous actresses and singers, great ladies, duchesses and marquises, ugly women or beautiful—all were alike to him. His daughters lived the same sort of life as himself, and were among the most extravagant and dissolute women of the century.

CHAPTER III

ACTRESSES AND COURTESANS

THE hairdressers and wig-makers of the eighteenth century were as important as the dressmakers. Soothsayers too, male and female, played an important part in social life—not only in gallant France, but also in London, Berlin, and Vienna. It was, however, the hairdresser and the lady's maid, above all, who seemed to have been created for the service of gallantry. The pert little lady's maid, in her trim, charming costume, open at the neck and with short sleeves, was traditionally the mistress of the householder and often of his friends as well. At the same time she was confidante and go-between in all the love affairs of her mistress. But the hairdresser was the natural confidant of both master and mistress, and very often with elderly ladies who had no lovers he had to fill an even more important rôle. Owing to the complicated fashions in hairdressing, he worked for hours at a time in the ladies' boudoirs, and heard all the scandalous gossip which went on among those who were present. It was almost inevitable that he should become the unwitting confidant of his clients. Furthermore, it was very important for the woman of the world in the eighteenth century to allow her hairdresser to see her in as charming a *négligé* as possible, for he was the best and most suitable person to talk about her charms elsewhere, or, as we should now say, to 'advertise' them. And if the lady was kind and generous he was all the more ready to add to her reputation and to extol her beauty. *La Physiologie du perruquier* has many startling stories on this subject. The hairdresser was universally pampered, for grand

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ladies as well as the greater and lesser actresses, dancers, and chorus-girls were dependent on him, the latter particularly, because he was often the means of introducing them to the most generous patrons. Most of the ladies of the theatre thought more of shining through their beauty and extravagance than through their talent; they cared little about being renowned for their virtue. Many of them had several children by different well-known men, and even regarded this circumstance as an asset, for the more children they had the greater the evidence of their power. When the young Casanova was, on one occasion, introduced to the famous singer Fel he saw in her house three delightful boys. He noticed their beauty, but was surprised that there was no resemblance between them. "That I can well imagine," replied Fel. "The eldest is the son of the Duc d'Anneçy, the second of Comte Egmont, and the third is the son of Comte Maison-rouge."

"Oh, forgive me, madame!" answered Casanova. "I thought they were all your children."

"So they are," she said, laughing aloud at the stranger who knew so little of Parisian customs.

Most actresses were the mistresses of nobles or other rich men. They passed from one to another and lived in the greatest luxury. Many recognized prostitutes also registered themselves as ballet-dancers or chorus-girls, and thus avoided the control of the police. They called themselves *filles d'opéra*, although they were seldom engaged in a theatre, and then only as substitutes. When they were seen at a theatre it was usually in a box with their admirers, decked out with diamonds and in the most daring *décolletés*. The boxes which such ladies frequented were, indeed, mostly used for other pleasure than that of admiring the piece which was being performed on the stage, for these ladies came there to entertain the gentlemen, and as the boxes were often provided with curtains or a close grating they lent themselves most admirably for the purpose.



THE DANCER M^{LE} GUIMARD
Anonymous. French. Mid-eighteenth century

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Moreau's charming picture *La petite Loge* shows the Prince de Soubise, to whom a real or pretended mother is introducing her young *débutante*. Soubise, whose nickname among the ladies of the theatre was "the Sultan," is behaving very gallantly to the little 'novice,' and does not seem disinclined to add the pretty girl to the number of his harem. Very often these 'theatre girls' were employed in the small private theatres of rich *roulés*, among whom the Duc de Richelieu had made himself particularly notorious by his choice of vicious plays. These theatrical performances were usually followed by a wild orgy in which the *filles d'opéra* gave unbridled vent to their love of pleasure. The actress, singer, or dancer of the eighteenth century was public property unless she was already so rich that she could afford to pick and choose. Until she attained this position she was treated simply as a prostitute. She was not received in Society, and she had no rights. There was no consecrated marriage for her and no consecrated burial, for she was buried without ceremony, like a criminal, in an obscure corner of the churchyard, unless she had a very rich patron who honoured her memory. When Karoline Neuber, the reformer of German theatrical art, died, in 1760, at Laubegast, near Dresden, the priest refused to allow the church gates to be opened for her funeral, and the coffin had to be lifted over the wall in order to find a spot for it in the churchyard. The Church excommunicated actresses. If actresses or actors wished to marry in church they had to give up the stage, as indeed many of them did. The scorn of eighteenth-century Society for these people who sacrificed to them their high spirits, their talents, their youth, and their bodies knew no bounds. Yet many of these girls at the height of their fame were raised by this same Society to a pinnacle of wealth and power which enabled them to be dispensers of favours and privileges themselves. Many of them possessed vast fortunes and helped to squander the millions of others, as, for example, the dancer Duthé, the actresses Arnould,

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Dubois, Clairon, Guimard, whose appetite for luxury was unbridled and who ruined many an ardent suitor. Many of them made no secret of the fact that they were prostitutes, could behave as such, and wished to be treated as such. Their spendthrift extravagance with the money of the rich upper classes was their revenge against the intolerance with which they were treated by eighteenth-century Society. Their lack of restraint, their debauchery, their cynicism, surpassed anything that could be experienced elsewhere even in that immoral age. Their extravagance, the boldness of their dress and their manners, their presumptuous appearance out of doors and at public functions, were a perpetual scandal. One of them would only drive in a carriage with six horses, and with servants in silver wigs. Another would be driven through the streets half-naked, in a chair of crystal or porcelain, choosing the most public places, the Champs-Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne. One of the most defiant of these ladies of the theatre was the Duthé, the richest and most generous of whose many lovers was the Duc de Chartres. In addition to costly gifts, diamonds, ornaments, dresses, and works of art, he paid her every month an income of 15,000 livres. The beautiful dancer Guimard, the "Grace of the eighteenth century," was maintained by her official lover, the Prince de Soubise, with a luxury that surpassed anything ever known before, even that of the extravagant Deschamps. The carriages, *toilettes*, and furniture of the Guimard could be compared only with those of the richest Court lady or king's mistress. The best male society frequented her house. Three times a week she had great suppers and receptions, but these three suppers differed much from one another. To the first supper only the richest and most distinguished nobles of the Court were invited, and everything was conducted as at a high society reception. To the second *soirée* came well-known writers, artists, and savants, until it seemed that the Guimard's *salon* would rival that of the witty Mme Geoffrin; but the third supper that the Guimard

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arranged each week was a veritable orgy, a bacchanal, to which the most seductive and beautiful girls were asked. Extravagance and immorality, as the *Mémoires secrets* relates, reached their zenith at these gatherings. In her marvellous country house at Pantin the rich and elegant dancer arranged theatre and ballet performances equal to those of the Pompadour, and all the Parisian aristocracy, among them princes of the blood, considered it an honour to be invited. There was a Court at Pantin as at Versailles. In the Guimard's theatre short immoral pieces were played, and the most respectable citizens, even churchmen and serious men of learning, fought for the shuttered boxes, and did not hesitate to appear at these performances among *roués* and women of the town.

Wages in those days were not high. A *filles d'opéra* was dependent on her admirer. Chorus-girls and ballet-girls received nothing at all. They were considered lucky to have the opportunity of displaying their charms in public in order to sell themselves to the highest bidder. Nearly all actresses began in this way; it was taken for granted from the outset that they would abandon their virtue, and with few exceptions they all conformed to custom. The dancer Vézian, whom Casanova knew, and who was one of the few respectable *filles d'opéra*, was amazed when she discovered that as a beginner she had no claim to wages.

"What am I to live on?" she asked.

"Don't worry about that," was the answer. "Just as you are you will find ten rich men who will make up to you for lack of wages. Of course, you must look for the right one, but very soon, you may be sure, you will be covered with diamonds."

And this prophecy was soon fulfilled. After a number of adventures she made the acquaintance of the Marquis d'Étréhan, who kept her like a queen. Her elegance, however, never degenerated into that *parvenu*-like luxury which characterized many of her colleagues. She would never have allowed herself to use toilet utensils made of massive gold, such as those

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possessed by the vicious Deschamps. Vézian was rich and conceited, yet, in spite of her extravagance, she preserved a certain amount of decency, for she possessed wit and taste, and the phrase of the period 'stupid as a dancer' certainly did not apply to her.

In spite of their faults and their vices, many of these theatre girls were tender-hearted and compassionate to the poor. The Guimard, for example, in 1768, when the winter was particularly severe, asked her rich friend the Prince de Soubise to give her for the New Year a gift of money instead of the usual diamonds. Soubise sent her 6000 francs, which in present-day values is about ten times as much.

This money, augmented by a sum from her private fortune, the Guimard took, without servant or maid, to all the garrets of the needy in the district, and distributed among the poor families, in order that they might provide themselves with food and clothing and warmth. She cared constantly for the poor, and even had them buried at her expense. The sympathy and generosity of the dancer were so well known in Paris that not only the poorest of the poor knocked at her door, but small shopkeepers faced with ruin, artists in distress, and even gamblers, who did not know how to pay their debts. The Guimard helped them all. On one occasion an officer came to her and borrowed 100 *louis d'or* to pay his gambling debts. When he offered her an I.O.U. the good creature said: "Sir, your word is sufficient. . . . I imagine an officer will possess at least as much honour as a *fille d'opéra*." Soon after this episode she herself was faced with distress, for she had ruined and lost two of her richest lovers, and her debts amounted to 400,000 livres. But so beautiful a woman and so wonderful a dancer as the Guimard had no difficulty in finding fresh patrons, and the 400,000 livres were soon paid off. It was no other than the Bishop of Orleans, Monseigneur de Jarente, who placed his immense fortune at the disposal of the capricious dancer and fulfilled all her wishes.



LE LEVER

*Colour-print by N.-F. Regnault
About 1775*

ACTRESSES AND COURTESANS

She owned one of the most delightful palaces in Paris. A pamphlet of the period can hardly find words to describe this "Temple of Terpsichore" in all its glory.

In a comparatively small space this charming home possessed every comfort and every amenity. Modern taste lends charm to everything, even to the garden. The rooms seem to have been endowed with comfort by a fairy. They are richly furnished without excess, and gallant without indecency. It is a palace of love beautified by the Graces. The bedroom invites to rest and love, the *salon* to pleasure and conversation, the dining-room to a merry feast . . . a wonderful hothouse takes the place of the garden in winter . . . there is a delightful little bathroom, which is probably unique of its kind and style.

The house possessed, indeed, what was very rare in those days, a built-in Persian bath. The dressing-room was furnished in crimson and white velvet, and the bedroom, instead of tapestries, was adorned with gigantic pictures by Fragonard. The whole furnishing was valued at about 27,532 livres.

Just as much taste and no less skill in providing herself with friends was possessed by the favourite actress Clairon, who began life as a little seamstress, and rose to be a great and renowned artist and one of the richest of her profession. She was extravagant and insatiable and not always particular who provided the money, although she too could count among her lovers some of the most distinguished men of the period, including the Prince de Soubise, the Duc de Luxembourg, the Marquis de Bissy, the Duc de Boufflers, and M. de la Popelinière. The list of her friends and lovers is endless. Eventually she was known to every rich man in Paris, Frenchmen and foreigners, and she was particularly partial to soldiers. Her most tender lover was the young Prince of Monaco, who sacrificed to her his money and his health. But she was just as unfaithful to him as she was to the young poet Marmontel, who loved her truly and passionately. He worshipped her, and called her the most perfect lover in the world. She was

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very temperamental, very merry, possessed all the attractions of an endearing character, had no caprices, and thought only of making her lovers happy. When she loved, none could be more passionate or tender than she, but her love was short-lived. Unfortunately Marmontel, owing to his love for Clairon, won for himself a very bad reputation. The *Archives de la Bastille* note that "Marmontel is unrecognizable since he has given himself up to the pleasures of this creature." Marmontel, moreover, was the only one who had no need to offer her unlimited riches. Every other had to purchase the love of the elegant, beautiful, and unfaithful woman with fabulous sums, and when they were fleeced she bade them a swift good-bye. Many of them took it lightly, like the Marquis des Ximenes. When his friends pitied him he replied by quoting a stanza from a comedy very popular at the time—*Vendanges de Suresnes* :

Défiez-vous de ces coquettes,
qui ne veulent qu'à vos écus :
sitôt qu'elles les ont reçus,
adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites.

The police reports of the eighteenth century throw a tragic light on the ladies of the Parisian theatre, not only on the ballet-girls, chorus-girls, and the lesser actresses of the small boulevard theatres, but also on the famous stars and on the most important *pensionnaires* of the Comédie Française. The lives led by these women differed very little from those of professional prostitutes. They seldom had lasting love affairs, and the rich men who built them palaces and wasted their substance on them were abandoned when ruin came. The less important actresses changed their lovers as often as they did their clothes. A love intrigue lasted a month, a week, a single night. Some of them, accustomed from their earliest youth, passed in the sordid theatrical life of the provinces, to a disorderly, dissolute bohemianism, were unable later, in spite of all their wealth, to keep a penny in their pockets. This was

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true of the vast majority of eighteenth-century actresses. Edmond de Goncourt writes :

In my opinion, at this period the houses of these women had not the propriety of those of the gallant ladies of other epochs. There was always something in their houses reminiscent of a house of ill fame.

This reputation was particularly applicable to Clairon. Nevertheless, she became later the greatly respected friend of the Margrave of Ansbach, for whom she almost took the place of First Minister, and she played an influential part at his Court until she was superseded by the beautiful Lady Craven. The end of this talented, intelligent, but exorbitantly extravagant *tragédienne* was itself a tragedy. She suffered terrible physical pain and sickness. The last love-letter of the old and faded Clairon, to an unknown friend, is deeply moving. It runs as follows :

However great the sufferings may have been with which nature and fate have overwhelmed me, your treatment of me has been even worse. Alone, deserted by all, blind, dying, I am filled with fear on your account : you have convinced me that I am no longer of any interest to you. Oh, my friend, I leave you to judge yourself. I was near to death and longed for it. What I have to suffer now is beyond my strength. Would to God that I could cling to my sad life until you are in a position to come to me !

She probably died without having seen him again. Such was the unhappy end of one of the most renowned figures in the theatre of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER IV

MME DU BARRY

ONE day a rumour ran through the palace that the old King Louis XV had taken a beautiful young mistress. There was astonishment and whispering. "A passing fancy?" "No, not at all. He is very much in love, madly in love. It is a serious affair." Some said that he had found her in the house kept by the notorious Gourdan. The best-informed maintained that she had once earned her living as a milliner at Labille's, that she was the most beautiful girl in Paris, and had for some considerable time been living at Compiègne in one of the King's *petites maisons*, in complete seclusion and secrecy. Every midnight she was fetched by the valet Lebel and brought to Louis's apartments, and not until morning did she leave the King, as secretly as she had come, to be taken back to her home in an elegant sedan chair. Who was she? What was her name? No one knew anything certain about her. Was she called Béquus or Bécu, Gomard or Vaubernier? At Labille's she had been called "L'Ange," because of her sweet and charming angel face, and because in those days it was not unusual for the little milliners and shop-girls to take pseudonyms, just as film stars do nowadays. In any case "L'Ange" was a very lovely girl, the illegitimate child of a dressmaker, Anne Béquus, of Vaucouleurs. Her father was said to have been a monk from the monastery Picpus. His name was Gomard de Vaubernier,¹ and as a monk he bore the name

¹ This story is declared by the Goncourts to be founded on a forged birth certificate, prepared in order to give a semblance of comparative respectability to the origin of Mme du Barry.—TRANSLATOR.

of Father Angelus. Perhaps that was the reason for giving the name "Ange" to his daughter. Later, when she became the mistress of Comte du Barry, she called herself Mlle de Vaubernier. She was christened Jeanne, and through the influence of an uncle, or perhaps through that of her father, Jeanne Bécu was brought up in a convent. There she was called Jeanne Rançon, because her mother in the meantime had married a man of that name.

After nine years' education in the convent Jeanne, as her mother was poor, had to earn her living as a lady's maid. She entered the service of Mme de la Garde, a rich widow with two sons; and one or other of these two young men seduced her. One of them gave the charming little lady's maid a watch set with diamonds; the other spoiled her with every kind of attention. But Jeanne could not hold her tongue; she gave herself airs among the other servants. Out of jealousy they bore tales to their mistress, and Jeanne Rançon was turned out of the house. Then she went as a milliner's apprentice to Mme Labille, in the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs, where she soon turned her talents to account.

It was not merely that her clever fingers produced marvels out of chiffon, tulle, silk, brocade, ribbon, and lace for Parisian ladies of Society and the *demi-monde*, but she herself (she now went by the name of Lançon) did not forget the beauty of her own sixteen years. The painter La Tour asked her to be his model, and after him many others.

After two years Jeanne suddenly disappeared from Labille's. After helping a wig-maker to squander his savings, and ruining several other lovers of a similar rank, she became the mistress of the notorious *roué* du Barry, and lived with him in the Rue Saint-Eustache.¹ Here she was the centre of a whole society of extravagant libertines, of whom her lover was the least prepossessing, for he was revoltingly ugly, and his

¹ The Goncourts in their life of du Barry say that he found her in the gambling house of Mme Duquesnoy in the Rue Bourbon.—TRANSLATOR.

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debaucheries and depravity were written all over his face. The fact that he was also diseased did not deter other candidates for the favours of his mistress, including such well-known members of the *haute noblesse* as the Duc de Richelieu, M. de Sainte-Foy, and the Comte de Manville. The Duc de Lauzun, who as a rule counted no price too high for an adventure, and although he considered Mlle de Vaubernier charming and most desirable, was held back by his fear of her physical condition.

The King had no scruples, or very few. He had fallen in love like a boy with the beautiful and lively girl. To please him Guillaume du Barry, a younger brother of Comte du Barry, went through a form of marriage with her, and was royally recompensed. And now the King no longer wanted to hide his passion. He wanted all to see her, that her youth and her beauty might bear witness to his perspicuity and good taste.

Mme du Barry was given apartments in the palace itself, in the suite next to the former rooms of the Pompadour. Her servants, who were numerous, wore the finest and most elegant livery in the whole of France, and her boudoir, her bedroom, and her reception rooms were furnished with the utmost refinement and taste. Her bed was the type beloved of the gallant Rococo lady, and so vividly described by Moreck.

The canopy-like superstructure no longer rests on pillars, as in the Renaissance, but hangs like a crown from the ceiling, letting the folded draperies of soft silk fall and billow round the bed, which is richly decked with heaped-up cushions and soft, voluptuous pillows. The lace and muslin frills in which the lady of the century envelops her white flesh fall like sweet-scented foam about the bed in which she rests from the enervating pleasures of the day, in which, as in a golden shell, she dreams of the excitements of love, in which, as caprice and opportunity allow, she holds her levees until late in the day.

Even in the palace Mme du Barry received her former friends, those she had made when she lived with her former



HEADRESSES

*Caricature. Print in the crayon manner
About 1777*

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lover in the Rue Saint-Eustache. Her circle of acquaintances changed little, but as the recognized mistress of the King she was treated with more respect than in the house of the *roué*. She herself remained unchanged. Her laugh was the wild, unrestrained laugh of the eighteen-year-old girl of the Parisian boulevards. She spoke her own language, and did not attempt in the least to adopt the affected and somewhat effeminate mode of speech which was the fashion in French high society in the eighteenth century. She took no notice of Court gossip and the slander of the people about her; particularly she ignored that of the party of the Duc de Choiseul, who was her bitterest enemy.¹ He and his friends made it known on all sides that the du Barry was a prostitute, a girl of the streets, and had been at the disposal of every hairdresser and lackey in Paris, and these rumours were not without a certain justification, for Mme du Barry herself once confessed to her first known lover, the hairdresser Lamet (the same whose 3000 francs she had squandered), that she was very badly off in Paris in the year 1761, and that she had to go out with her mother at nights to seek adventures in the Palais-Royal. But this life, she said, brought her in no more than eighteen to twenty francs a night.

Choiseul knew this, and saw that it became known at Court. He did more. He induced the hangers-on of her circle to tell him all they knew of her past, and advised them to make love to her as much as possible, just as they had done before she became the King's mistress. It was said quite openly at Court that her father had been an army priest and her mother a woman of the streets, and that she herself had been ready to sell her body to anyone for a twenty-franc piece until du Barry had made her a more attractive offer. And there were plenty of gossips to see that this came to the ears

¹ Choiseul's hostility was well founded, for the rapid rise of Mme du Barry was due as much to the intrigues of the anti-Choiseul party as to the infatuation of the King.—TRANSLATOR.

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of the King. The newspapers were full of the most scandalous stories, and Louis XV knew them all. But he only smiled, and said to his minister Choiseul: "She is very beautiful; she pleases me; that is enough. The fury against this woman is terrible—but it is mostly unjustified. They would all be at her feet, but—*c'est la vie!*"

The little milliner could hardly believe in her change of fortune. She was no longer the young girl who, in earlier days, when the King had first taken an interest in her, had been seen on Sundays, with a thick veil over her face, seated in a chair reserved for her in the church at Fontainebleau. Now she had wonderful carriages, and a marvellous gilded chair bearing on the door the arms of the du Barrys, quartered with those of the Gomard-Vauberniers. Both were probably fictitious, but what matter! She was the mistress of the King of France—the most renowned and most envied woman in the country. Soon she was to be openly recognized and to appear before the whole Court, as once Mme Pompadour had done, she who had once been a shop-girl in the Maison Labille! Old duchesses and princesses had to bow to her, had to speak kindly to her and to kiss her hand. But she, the Comtesse du Barry, was young and beautiful, happy, careless, free, and open, saying anything that came into her head, entertaining the King—whom, incidentally, she addressed, without ceremony, as "*Monsieur*"—with her high spirits, her impudence, and her youth.

At last the day came when she was to be formally received at Court, a day when the cut of a dress or the colour of a ribbon might decide her own fate and that of France. Among her friends there was a difference of opinion as to what the new favourite should wear; whether it should be a simple evening dress or full Court regalia. The majority were in favour of the *décolleté*. Advice was sought of the most famous dressmakers, of the most skilful hairdressers, and of the best masters of deportment. They decided in the end on the Court

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dress, and they decided rightly, for Mme du Barry was to prove no passing fancy on the part of Louis, but the uncrowned Queen of France.

Such a crowded Court had not been seen for years. The entire nobility of France was present, with the exception of the Duc de Choiseul, whose absence only made her triumph the greater. The courtyard of the palace was full of curious onlookers. The stairs, the rooms, the galleries, the corridors, were filled with people. There was no trace of hostility in their attitude.¹ There was nothing foreign to their ideas in the notion that a woman should reign by right of her beauty. Suddenly the King appeared, but even he had to wait, for the du Barry had not yet arrived. The little shop-girl had dared to be unpunctual at the King's reception! The onlookers grew restless. Choiseul's friends exchanged significant glances, as much as to say, "The hussy hasn't dared to come after all." All eyes were turned toward the courtyard, but no new carriage came. The King was agitated; hectic spots appeared on his faded cheeks. Something must have happened that she had not come. Richelieu stood at his side; he too was nervous. It was already being suggested that the festivity should be postponed to the following day, when suddenly the King's eyes lighted up. She was coming. The splendid carriage was turning in at the gate of the courtyard; it drove slowly over the irregular flagstones, and halted with a jerk at the gilded gates of the marble vestibule.

With light and elastic steps Mme du Barry jumped out of her carriage. Even those who might have come with resentment in their hearts against the extravagant courtesan were unable to conceal their admiration. In a moment all their envy, all their enmity, had flown before the beauty and sweetness of this dainty, elegant woman. There was nothing but admiration,

¹ The clergy, at least, were delighted. The rise of du Barry meant the fall of Choiseul, and the fall of Choiseul meant, it was hoped, the recall of the Jesuits.—
TRANSLATOR.

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astonishment, and delight in every eye. In their secret hearts did they not wish that the King might once more have a beautiful young mistress? They pressed eagerly round the chair in which the loveliest woman in France was being carried up the steps to a throne. A girl of the people! A little dress-maker! Jeanne Bécu from the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs! *Incroyable!*

Tall, slender, graceful, and lithe, she appeared in the long, magnificent Court dress, in spite of the immense *paniers* and the train many yards long. In spite of the towering edifice of her powdered wig, the young du Barry made her three curtsies as faultlessly and gracefully as though she had never done anything else. Then the King gave her the ceremonial kiss on her cheek. Making the same curtsies, she retired to the door; but that was more difficult. Many a great lady had had the misfortune to trip over her own train and to be unable to rise. But Mme du Barry performed the ceremony with the natural grace of one who had been accustomed to it from childhood. And as she swept by her enemies, her big blue, roguish eyes lit up with joy. There was a smile on her red-rouged lips, and her white teeth gleamed. She held her charming little head proudly, and even the most envious had to concede that she had wonderful shoulders and faultless breasts. Her lovely complexion was admired, her delicately curved nose, the wonderful oval of her face, the pure line of her brow. To all onlookers she seemed the most beautiful woman in the world. The beautiful and elegant ladies of the Court were eclipsed completely.

Besides her beauty, she had a naturalness of manner and speech, an unaffectedness in her dress and even in her coquetry, that delighted all the men, the King most of all. She was a woman, a human being, not just a doll. The greater part of her day was spent in the care of her youthful body, studying to the minutest detail how she could make herself yet more charming and seductive for her royal lover. Following the



MISCHIEF

*Colour-print by C.-M. Descourtis
About 1780*

taste of her age, she often dressed—or undressed—herself as Flora in gossamer-thin gauze, and her passion for fancy dress took up so much time that the routine of the Court had to suffer. Sometimes a ball, a supper-party, a theatrical performance, had to be postponed for several hours, or even put off altogether, and the whole Court would be kept waiting on the caprice of the beautiful favourite. But the King tolerated these delays—they seemed to whet his appetite—and he never upbraided his mistress. At the most, if the wait grew interminable, he would send Lebel to tell her to appear in ordinary evening dress, because that would be quicker. On one occasion she conceived what at that period was particularly ‘revolutionary.’ She appeared at Court without the high edifice of the powdered wig, with her hair hanging almost loose, and on one side a few ringlets brushing her shoulder. She declared that she had not had time to complete the complicated *coiffure*, because the King was in a hurry. She apologized to him: “I have come without my hair dressed.” “All the more charming,” was the gallant reply.

From that day Mme du Barry no longer wore her lovely fair hair piled up high or powdered. She had introduced a new fashion. She even dared to appear at Mass—when full Court dress was *de rigueur*—with flowing curls. The old ladies of the Court, who possessed only a few sparse grey or white hairs of their own, and for whom the artificial *coiffure* was a great boon, made a great outcry against this innovation, but the young ones were delighted to imitate the du Barry, and found their own hair far more becoming. Only the young Crown Princess, Marie-Antoinette, and her ladies considered it beneath their dignity to accept this woman from the lowest ranks of the nation as their leader in fashion and elegance. On the contrary, the *coiffures* of Marie-Antoinette, of Mme de Lamballe, and of Mme de Polignac were piled up an inch or two higher than usual, so that even Maria Theresa considered it necessary to reprimand her daughter. She wrote to her on

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March 15, 1775, and, after one or two other admonitions, continued :

I cannot refrain from speaking to you on another point, which is brought to my notice too often in the papers : it is the question of your hairdressing. They say that your *coiffure* rises 36 inches from the roots of the hair, and is decorated with a mass of feathers and ribbons, which make it even higher ! You know that I was always of opinion that one should follow the fashions with restraint, but never exaggerate them.

Marie-Antoinette was also told by her mother that she had no right to treat the King's mistress so haughtily, but that she should speak to her as she would to any other lady who was received at Court.

The du Barry, on her part, was extravagant and greedy, and her clothes and her whims cost the King colossal sums. Apart from the many costly gifts of diamonds, pearls, and other jewellery, of palaces, works of art, furniture, horses, and carriages, she received 200,000 francs a month in cash for her personal use, and later this sum was increased to 300,000 francs. It is a curious fact that this immense sum was always paid to her in silver six-franc pieces, and the whole of it had to be transported in carts from Paris to Versailles or Fontainebleau or wherever she happened to be staying. And when Mme du Barry demanded still larger sums—as was usually the case, for she never managed with her allotted income—the carts were in danger of breaking down under the weight of the money bags and ran, one would think, great danger from highwaymen.

Her carriage and sedan chair were the most elegant and the most costly in the whole of France. Not even the bridal coach which the King ordered for Marie-Antoinette, and in which she was fetched from Germany, could compete with the carriage of the courtesan. It had been ordered in the very same year, and the rumour ran that Mme du Barry had been given it by her lover the Duc d'Aiguillon, as a reward for

obtaining for him his post as minister. It had cost 50,000 livres, but she had to sell it again very soon because, it was said, the King was jealous of his minister's gift.

The whole of her life, as the Goncourts have expressed it, was a self-indulgent woman's dream of wild expenditure and extravagant luxury; it was the ideal "of a prostitute, the best-kept woman in France." Millions were squandered for a caprice of fashion, millions for a rare jewel, for lace, velvet, and silk. A veritable stream of gold flowed through the hands of tailors, milliners, dressmakers, gold- and silver-embroiderers. Every morning at her *petite levée* du Barry, as she lay half-naked in bed, received a crowd of artists and craftsmen. No day passed without her ordering something—a new dress or a costly *biblot*.

Yet there was nothing in her conduct to distinguish it from that of any other fashionable woman of the period. It was the usual custom for a lady of fashion to receive her tradespeople either lying in bed or in her bathroom. She would lie quite unconcerned in the bath, although usually a towel was spread over it so that her body was only visible to below the breasts. Some ladies wore a kind of nightgown in the bath; others put asses' milk in the water, partly to make the skin soft and partly to make the water opaque. To receive male friends while lying in bed was the accepted mode even for the most respectable women, and there was certainly no reason why the du Barry should not do so. Only, of course, she turned her morning reception into a positive festival of seduction.

Her levees were notorious. Like those of the Queen, they were attended by the ministers and ambassadors of the King, of the Pope, and of foreign rulers. From a spirit of pure mischief she would step quite naked out of the silk covers and lace cushions of her great bed, so that every one could admire the slender lines of her legs, her thighs, and her beautifully formed breasts. She moved about unembarrassed under the eyes of the courtiers, and delighted to play tricks on them,

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usually making a dead set at the most solemn dignitaries, who did not dare to restrain her impudence. One morning, in bravado, she stretched out one naked leg to the Papal nuncio and the other to the King's almoner. She bade them put on her high-heeled slippers, and not until they had done so did she allow her maid to cover her with a *négligé* of silk and lace, which, indeed, unclothed rather than clothed her. In extravagances and jokes of this kind, however, she had famous forerunners among the ladies of the Court, as, for instance, the Duchesse du Maine, who used to hold masked balls in her bedroom while she lay in bed in a very piquant *négligé*.

The *château* at Luciennes owned by the du Barry was a fairy-palace of luxury and refinement, and its mistress was dressed to match. "If you want to imagine the wardrobe of the Comtesse," say the Goncourts,

you have only to look at the account-books preserved in Paris at the Bibliothèque National. They give the most valuable evidence of her taste, and are really the only documents of the period worthy of perpetuating the memory of du Barry's reign. . . . In these you may read the description of the stage costumes which she gave to the actress Mlle Raucourt and to the actor Lekain, her set of table linen for coffee, of the finest Indian lawn, and even of the last dressing-gown and slippers which she ordered for the King. We are told of the everyday livery of her servants, which was of fawn-coloured cloth trimmed with silver, and of her grand livery of red velvet. Even the negro Zamore is shown to us in his Saxony-green coat trimmed with gold, and the Comtesse's courier in his sky-blue Polish coat, and in his hand a cane with a golden knob, engraved by Roettiers. . . . Or if you wish to look through the wardrobe of Mme du Barry you may see an endless succession of Court dresses, *négligés*, dressing-gowns, dresses costing 1000, 2000, 5000, and 10,000 francs, purchased from the silk merchants Buffant, Lenormand, Assorty, Barbier, and Bourjot, or those made by her *couturière* Mme Sigly, of silver brocade garnished with tufts of feathers, of white silk ornamented with garlands of roses, striped dresses with bars of gold mingled with sprigs of flowers, dresses of 'mosaic' pattern stiffened with gold and bordered with myrtle, riding habits



STAGE COSTUME FOR "IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS"
"Galerie des Modes." Engraving by R. Gaillard. 1780

MME DU BARRY

costing 6000 livres . . . dresses of white silk embroidered all over with coloured sequins.

The trimmings and accessories of the dresses were equally luxurious. Pagelle, the modiste in the Rue Saint-Honoré, possessed an inexhaustible imagination for the invention of every kind of new and charming trifle, and it is not surprising that a single *toilette* produced by him cost as much as 10,500 livres. Besides the dresses, there was the lace, of which Mme du Barry possessed so much that at her death it was valued at 200,000 livres. . . .

Mme du Barry had a particular fancy for dainty trinkets and costly trifles of every kind. We need only examine her purchases from the royal china factory at Sèvres. She acquired for her palace at Luciennes great vases with handles and rams' heads, charming baskets patterned with trailing flowers, teapots with biscuit-coloured china handles, and royal-blue flower-vases patterned with trellis-work. Dozens of these fragile works of art were ruined in the furnace for each piece successfully finished. A table service in the Chinese style was produced by the factory, and delivered on the morning of the day on which the King was to sup at Luciennes. The most skilful painter in the factory had worked for two and a half months decorating the delicate plates. In the list of all these extravagances—like a book kept by the treasurer of Cleopatra to enumerate the price and value of the pearls melted down to satisfy the caprice of a woman—we come next to the precious metals, to the gold and the silver which enriched the furniture. For her table silver was soon not splendid enough, and Mme du Barry ordered a service in solid gold, with handles of crimson jasper. Roettiers, the goldsmith, provided gold sugar-spoons with chiselled *amorini* playing among the garlands of roses, a gold coffee-pot, a gold milk-jug adorned with sculptured sprigs of myrtle. Finally she expressed a desire for a gold toilet set, and Roettiers was commissioned to make it. The whole of Paris talked of this toilet set, and it was said that the Government had given to Roettiers a gold bar weighing 700 pounds. But at last the work had to be countermanded on account of the colossal expense and of the scandal to which it gave rise. In the account-books the only entry is a compensation to Roettiers for an uncompleted *toilette* in gold.

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Luciennes was a boudoir-palace in which everything had the polish and the costliness of a jewel . . . the smallest ornaments were exquisite and unique. . . . Nothing was lacking in this enchanted castle. There was even, as in a fairy-tale depicted by Paul Veronese, a little black servant, who was regarded as a sort of human monstrosity, and handed round the dishes and refreshments, carried parasols, and turned somersaults—one of those little monsters so beloved by the exotic taste of the eighteenth century, which regarded the negro, so to speak, as a little two-legged animal. The Prince de Conti was responsible for the name Zamore . . . Zamore and Luciennes! They went so well together. Luciennes was so completely the appropriate cage of the little negro that the King one evening, in a mood of wild high spirits, nominated Zamore, who was playing at his feet, as Governor of the *château*, with a monthly salary of 600 livres. The Chancellor smilingly put his seal on letters patent made out in the name of the du Barry's pet.¹ And through this realm of fantasy flew from the finger of his mistress, on to the shoulder of the Governor, the emerald-green talking parrot given to Mme du Barry by a naval officer, who had received in exchange the Order of St Louis.

So much splendour surrounded Mme du Barry, with an atmosphere of fairy-tale. The end was all the worse for her, for, like Marie-Antoinette, she had to expiate her gaiety and her extravagance by death on the scaffold. But this impulsive creature, who depended so much on life and its joys, was completely broken and weak when faced with so terrible an end. Unlike the Queen, who went to the place of execution quietly resigned and deep in meditation, Mme du Barry was pitiable in the hour of her death. She sobbed the whole way, and the crowd had nothing for the unhappy woman but scorn and mockery.

As she drove by the shop where she herself had once worked as a little milliner she saw a number of work-girls standing on the balcony, curious to see their one-time companion on her sorrowful journey. "Perhaps," say the Goncourts,

¹ Zamore, who was not a negro, but a native of Bengal, bore witness against Mme du Barry at her trial.—TRANSLATOR.

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she saw, with the clear vision of the dying, her whole life stretched out before her: her youth, Versailles, Luciennes. It was a moment's dream from which she woke with a great cry, heart-rending shrieks which could be heard from one end of the Rue Saint-Honoré to the other. The executioner and his two assistants had great difficulty in holding the wildly gesticulating creature on the cart. In her fear she tried to fling herself on to the pavement. Her shrieks were followed by sobs and supplications. Her clipped hair hung in her eyes. . . . The crowd was astonished. They were so accustomed to see people die bravely, even defiantly, that it was as if they realized for the first time that a woman was being dragged to her death. . . . The unhappy creature kept crying through her tears: "Life! Life! If my life is granted to me I will give the people everything I possess."

"Everything you possess!" came the answer. "You are offering the people only what belongs to it."

None the less there was a feeling of sympathy for this weak woman fighting for her life. A coalheaver gave the fellow who had given so cynical an answer to the unhappy creature a mighty blow on the head, and the executioner brought the miserable scene to an end by driving the cart with the victim in it away at a gallop. At the place of execution he made Mme du Barry dismount first. She was nearly mad with fear and horror. A few more minutes and then for her, who had so loved life, all would be at an end. She fell down sobbing before the executioner and prayed to be spared for a minute longer, but she might as well have pleaded with a stone. Even with her head in the guillotine, she cried out in her death agony: "Help! Help!" No one could help her. Events had sealed her fate.

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OF the French queens and royal princesses neither Marie Leszczyńska, nor her daughter-in-law the Dauphine, nor, before them, the Duchesse d'Orléans, wife of the Regent, had made any attempt to assume a particular elegance, either in dress or in habits of life. The Duchesse d'Orléans was much too lazy by nature to do anything to improve her appearance. She lay all day on her divan, while her eldest daughter, the extravagant Duchesse de Berry, joined her father, the Regent Louis-Philippe, and his commonplace mistresses, in the wild orgies of the Luxembourg. Marie Leszczyńska's lack of elegance was founded on reasons entirely opposite. She was pious and domestic in her tastes, and spent most of the time in her apartments with needlework, with music, or with books. She hated the formality of etiquette and the grandeur of display. She was indeed the only lady at the Court of Louis XV who did not paint her face, at a time when the lavish use of rouge was universal. When Casanova saw her for the first time, at a public dinner at Versailles, he reported: "I saw the Queen of France. She had put on no rouge, and was plainly dressed. On her head she wore a large hood, and looked old and prudish." Even her father, the Polish King Stanislas, used to talk of the inelegance and dullness of his daughter, and he was not altogether surprised that Louis XV neglected her and turned to more attractive and more coquettish women. She was no fool, but she cared for culture for its own sake rather than for the uses to which it might be put in society. She spoke several languages, read much and with

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discrimination, was musical, understood the arts, and painted a little herself. Nevertheless she lacked that particular charm which a man seeks in a woman, and she was unfitted by nature to hold the affections of Louis. The frivolous pleasures of life held no attraction for her, and she could not understand how completely they could captivate a king. She preferred her dogs to her husband, and often kept him waiting, even at night, while she attended to their wants.

Louis had eight daughters, six of whom grew up to be women, but none of these had any instinct for elegance. Indeed, they neglected even the amount of care in dress which might reasonably be expected in so brilliant a Court. One of their duties, on the performance of which Louis strictly insisted, was to appear at their father's *coucher*, to entertain him with conversation while he was preparing for bed. They obeyed, but in most slovenly fashion. Mme Campan tells us that as they were usually already in bed when the King began to think of retiring, and, as it was *de rigueur* to appear in full Court dress at the King's *coucher*, they hastily flung a brocaded hoop over their night attire, tied on a train yards long, and over that put on a wide cloak of taffeta or silk, which hid the defects of their mock Court *toilette*. Then they ran hastily to the King, stayed with him for as short a time as possible, and ran back again in the same way, in order to creep as quickly as possible among the feather-pillows of their own beds.

Marie-Antoinette was the first who, as Dauphine and as Queen, thought it important for the ladies of the royal family to set an example of elegance. There are even historians who lay the entire blame for the failure of the flight to Verennes on her vanity. For the Queen insisted on taking with her her *coiffeur*, the famous Leonard Autier, and a few of her favourite dressmakers. But Autier, like all great artists, was unreliable. He was late, and the whole plan of flight so minutely worked out was ruined.

And yet Marie-Antoinette was not altogether a vain and

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coquettish woman, nor was her elegance altogether consistent. Her clothes were rich and beautiful, but somewhat negligently put on, and she was often careless and untidy in her dress. Her personal cleanliness was not very strict, especially before she became Queen, and she used her bathroom but seldom. As a rule a large vessel of water brought to her room sufficed for her rapid toilet. Her mother, Maria Theresa, in her letters, had frequently to draw attention to her daughter's laziness in this matter, particularly to her neglect of her teeth. But we must not forget that there was nothing unusual in this. The Rococo period, with all its luxury, was a period of dirt and lack of hygiene. Earlier it was even worse. Louis XIV hardly ever washed. He sprayed his face and hands lightly with eau de Cologne in the mornings, and had only one bath a year, in the spring. In consequence, he gave out an absolutely unbearable odour, for he suffered for years from a festering mouth sore which the doctors were unable to cure.

The manuals of etiquette of the period gave little encouragement to cleanliness. Their advice for the morning toilet was limited to the recommendation "to rub the face every morning with a white linen cloth." The use of water is not mentioned. Even doctors held the view that too much cleanliness was injurious to health. Regular care of the mouth and teeth was by no means common, and Marie-Antoinette paid as little attention to this as her contemporaries. Dentistry was in its infancy, and some of its practitioners little better than quacks. The stopping of teeth, gold and silver fillings, and artificial dentures were unknown, so that the most beautiful and most elegant woman often had bad and defective teeth, revealed in all their hideousness as soon as the lovely lips were opened.

Foul breath could be partially hidden by the use of scent, and the perspiration of the body was usually veiled in the same manner. Perfumes tended to be very strong therefore, and the women of the eighteenth century were always surrounded



LA DOUCE RÉSISTANCE

Colour-print by S. Tresca after L.-L. Boilly. 1786

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by a stifling cloud of fragrance. But they had a wonderful gift for selecting their perfumes to suit their personalities. Indeed, this was the case with all those arts of the toilet which they employed to enhance and set off their beauty.

The use of powder and rouge was raised to the level of a fine art in the eighteenth century, and when one thinks of the great artists of the powder-puff and lipstick one cannot do better than echo Théophile Gautier in his song of praise to the secrets of the toilet :

With that rare sense of harmony which characterizes women, they have grasped that there is a disparity between full dress and everyday appearance. Just as skilful painters bring the flesh tints and draperies into harmony by the use of pale blues, women powder their skins white so that it may not appear grey beside the lace, shot silk, and satin. By this means they give their *toilette* a unity of tone, which is preferable to that juxtaposition of white and yellow and pink, the natural colours of the purest skin. By this fine dust they give the skin a marble gleam, and take from it the appearance of that rosy-cheeked health which for our civilization implies coarseness.

But in the period of gallantry powder and rouge did not serve alone for the simulation of a youthful and harmonious complexion. They were too often necessary in order to hide the ravages of the terrible and widely spread smallpox, for in the eighteenth century most people were scarred by this frightful disease. No rank of society was immune, and Louis XV died of it.

Marie-Antoinette's complexion, however, was the most beautiful imaginable. Mme Vigée-Lebrun, when painting the Queen's portrait, had difficulty in finding colours on her palette delicate enough to portray the natural bloom of the Queen's skin. Yet Marie-Antoinette was not vain enough to give much care to her lovely body. When she was Dauphine she even refused to wear a corset, which was an absolute necessity for the fashions of the day. It was not for reasons of health or beauty, however, that she refused to lace herself,

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but simply from slovenliness and love of comfort. Consequently, in comparison with the wasp waists of the other ladies, hers appeared broad and awkward. At last she had to give way to the persuasions of her maids and her mother, and to follow the universal fashion. But Maria Theresa sent her from Vienna bodices which were not so stiffly made as the Parisian corsets.

Marie-Antoinette paid most attention to her headdress and her riding habit. She was a brilliant horsewoman, and, contrary to the custom among her French contemporaries, she always rode astride, like an Englishwoman. She looked most distinguished in her long habit of fawn cloth, her close-fitting riding breeches of green velvet, her three-cornered hat, and her fair hair plaited into a pigtail like an officer's. As a young woman she was very slender and had small, neat hips, and on horseback she looked like a very handsome and elegant young man. Louis XV was so delighted with her appearance that, to please him, Mme du Barry used to dress in this way when she went out hunting, but even the favourite could not rival the beauty of Marie-Antoinette's youthful body. The Princess was only just sixteen.

She was a lively young woman, eager to taste the pleasures of life, and as her husband did not share her love for gaiety, but preferred to work at his lathe, she soon sought other companionship. The Comte d'Artois, her husband's frivolous young brother, became her habitual escort when she went stag-hunting in the Bois. He took her also to the races at Sablon, where the inexperienced girl appeared among jockeys, adventurers, and men of the world. And as Artois, after a hunt of this kind, or an expedition to the country, spent the night in the gay and wanton companionship of his friends and their mistresses in the little hunting-boxes of the district, Court gossip was quick to declare that the young Queen had been there also. Appearances were against her. The Comte d'Artois was seen everywhere with her; he was her councillor

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in all worldly matters ; he, the greatest libertine in Paris, of whom his kindest critics said that he was nothing but a "great, badly behaved child who, when his debaucheries and depravities left him a moment of time, was only fit for rowdiness and mischief." It was he who persuaded Marie-Antoinette to go to the notorious Opéra balls with him, where every light-minded and debauched creature in Paris was to be found. Ladies of the aristocracy and of the Court, prostitutes, adventuresses, actresses, chorus-girls, and a princess of France were brought together by the same desire for frivolity. The masks and dominoes were insufficient to guard her incognito, and Marie-Antoinette was always recognized. But other ladies of the aristocracy were there also, snatching stolen kisses under a disguise which was often only too transparent, for the mask drew attention to the face rather than concealed it.

Neglected by her husband, the young Queen was driven by the craving for change and diversion to commit grave indiscretions. It was said that she danced till five o'clock in the morning at the public balls, returned home to Versailles at half-past six, and a few hours later, at ten o'clock, set off again with the Comte d'Artois to the hunt and the races.

Her extravagance as Dauphine and as Queen was proverbial, and she was bitterly reproached for her expensive gowns, for her high headdresses and her hats decked with costly ostrich feathers. She was blamed for her passion for gambling, for her love of diamonds and other jewels, and because she was always buying new ornaments, although the splendour of the Crown jewels which she wore eclipsed anything she could possibly buy. Even Maria Theresa heard of the extravagance of her daughter, and wrote from Vienna to admonish her :

All the reports from Paris say that you have bought yourself bracelets costing 250,000 livres, and have thereby brought your financial affairs into disorder and plunged yourself into debt, and that in order to meet this you have sold some of your diamonds

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for a very low price. The conclusion is that you are leading the King into superfluous extravagance, which has been increasing for some time past, and has brought the State into the hopeless condition in which it now is. . . . This French heedlessness—all these extravagant ornaments! My daughter, the best of all queens, to behave like this! The thought is unbearable!

With her love of jewellery Marie-Antoinette not only set an example to the ladies of the Court and the high nobility of wearing as many diamonds as possible, but even inspired the rich women of the *bourgeoisie* to follow in her footsteps. The favourite gems were diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires, and those who could not afford the genuine stones wore imitations. The eighteenth century produced wonderful examples of the art of the goldsmith and jeweller, who found a market for their wares not only among women, but among men.

Monsieur the King's brother wore a coat extravagantly embroidered in gold, on which there was hardly a square inch unornamented with a diamond or other precious stone. The fops bedecked themselves with jewellery in the shape of feathers, rosettes, bows and ribbons, and with gold and silver tassels. The women wore costly gems everywhere: on their clothes and in their hair; their arms, necks, and fingers were covered with diamonds. At the theatre, at the balls, at Court, and at every kind of social function the festive appearance of the assembly owed not a little to the reflected light of all the precious stones. When Casanova visited the Opéra in Paris for the first time he was particularly struck by the bediamonded ladies who sat in the front boxes. On the same evening he made the acquaintance of the *fermier général*, Beauchamps, and his wife, who invited him to dine at their house. There he obtained confirmation of the abundance, or rather of the extravagance, to be found in Paris at that period among people of the wealthy classes—a numerous company of bejewelled elegants of both sexes gambling for high stakes;



THE SHAPELY LEG
"Galerie des Modes." Engraving by Leclerc

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there was excellent food and unbridled gaiety at table. The very stout mistress of the house herself carried on her person a fortune in pearls, diamonds, and other jewellery.

The extravagance and luxury which Marie-Antoinette later permitted herself were therefore hardly an exception. She increased and enlarged her racing stables. She beautified Trianon, distributed pensions liberally among her friends, and entertained the ladies and gentlemen of her circle to luxurious suppers, dances, and plays. But she always found her greatest amusement in gambling, particularly in the game of faro, and at this game lost enormous sums evening after evening. Anyone who liked could, without an introduction, come up to her table and seat himself. The one condition was that he should bring with him plenty of money and be willing to lose it, for the ladies in the Queen's circle were most arrant cheats. There was a rumour that the Duc de Chartres, in order to please the young Queen, once lost 30,000 *louis d'or* in one evening. Maria Theresa was extremely unhappy at this unfortunate passion of her daughter, and trembled for her future. She gave her this warning:

Do not deceive yourself—gambling attracts bad company in every country of the world . . . the desire to win gives it too strong a hold, and in the end one is always injured . . . you must curb this passion at once; no one can give you better advice on this point than I, for I was once in the same position.

But all her mother's warnings were of no avail, and Marie-Antoinette continued to be a slave to gambling. Indeed, the passion for gambling had always been strong at the French Court, and it was not only at the Queen's table that the stakes were high. The Duchesse de Berry, for example, a very elegant woman with a particularly shady reputation, the daughter of the Regent and granddaughter of the honest Liselotte, lost in one evening's play 1,800,000 francs. Other ladies and gentlemen of the Court were not far behind her. Even Voltaire, who was avaricious and hated throwing his

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money away, went so far as to lose 12,000 francs at the gambling tables. At the Court of Louis XVI the tradition was carried on. But Marie-Antoinette was now established as a scapegoat in the eyes of Parisians, and was held responsible for everything. It was declared that Versailles and Fontainebleau were no whit better than the gambling hells of Spa and other fashionable resorts of the period.

Everything the Queen did was criticized adversely. She was reproached with preferring to gamble and enjoy herself rather than to become a mother. And even later, when she became a most affectionate mother to her three children, justice was not done to her. It was made a grievance against her that her first-born child could not be heir to the throne.

In this connexion it provides an interesting sidelight on the history of manners to understand what a reigning princess had to endure when the hour of delivery drew near, that hour in which the simplest woman of the *bourgeoisie* is guarded and cared for so that she may not be unduly excited, that hour in which every woman longs to share her pleasure in the birth of a child with her husband alone. But queens belonged to the nation, and the nation desired, and was permitted, to see not only how kings ate, but how queens bore children. At the time of Marie-Antoinette's first confinement the public behaved in a particularly wild way.

As soon as labour had begun and the Queen had been laid upon the bed prepared for her delivery, the royal family gathered round her, while the rest of the Court, including all the ministers and Secretaries of State, awaited the great moment in the anterooms. At the cry "The Queen is giving birth" the expectant masses, assembled outside, thronged in and mingled in noisy crowds among the courtiers, and the whole of this unrestrained mob rushed into the Queen's bedroom, for etiquette demanded that at such a moment anybody might enter, and no one should be turned away. When Marie-Antoinette was bearing her first child, the masses, in their joyful unrestraint, made such a wild approach to her bed that the bed-curtains, although they had been firmly

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secured for safety's sake, could hardly withstand the onrush, and nearly fell on the young Queen as she lay groaning with pain and gasping for breath. Around her bed the masses thronged as though in a public square, and curious eyes had the privilege of feasting on the charms of her beautiful body, displayed with every movement. The reason for this custom was to ensure the nation against the possibility of an exchange of children and to prevent any suspicion of deception.

This description, given by Moreck in his *Geschichte des Bettes*, is confirmed by all contemporary and subsequent historical works concerned with the life of the unhappy French Queen.

Napoleon was the first to break the custom of public birth, for when Marie-Louise gave birth to the King of Rome the only people present in the bedroom of the patient were the doctor, the midwife, a chambermaid, and the future governess of the royal child. The happy event was announced to the members of the family and the courtiers waiting in the adjoining rooms by Napoleon himself, but the young mother received no visitors until much later.

The publicity of the Queen's life had a pleasant as well as a disagreeable side, and her reign was marked, at least in its early period, by a series of brilliant Court festivities, an orgy of extravagance, of frivolity and grandeur, of dinners, balls, and ballets, at which she was always the brightest star. Horace Walpole, who attended one of these balls on the occasion of the marriage of Princesse Clotilde, the sister of Louis XVI, could hardly find words to express the beauty of Marie-Antoinette :

It was impossible to see anything but the Queen. Hebes and Floras, and Helens and Graces, are street-walkers to her. She is a statue of beauty, when standing or sitting ; grace itself when she moves. She was dressed in silver, scattered over with laurier-roses ; few diamonds, and feathers, much lower than the Monument. They say she does not dance in time, but there it is wrong to dance in time.

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Frau von Oberkirch also, in her reminiscences, praises the beauty, elegance, and amiability of Marie-Antoinette. She writes about one of those great festivities at Versailles, to which many foreign royalties and guests were invited: "It is impossible to imagine so much brilliance and wealth. The *toilettes* were fabulous. The Queen, lovely as the day, enlivens everything with her brilliant beauty." The worthy Maria Theresa thought otherwise about the elegance of her beautiful daughter. She considered it exaggerated, and declared:

A beautiful young queen, so full of grace, has no need of such follies: on the contrary, simplicity of dress enhances her appearance and is better suited to the rank of queen: she has but to set the tone, and all will hasten to adopt even her smallest eccentricities.

Marie-Antoinette, with her youth and *joie de vivre*, brought variety and gaiety to the otherwise monotonous and dull Court of Louis XVI. She and her equally young friends Mme de Polignac, Mme de Lamballe, the charming Duchesse d'Orléans, and other ladies of the aristocracy, such as Mmes Rohan-Guémené, Choiseul, Coigny, and Gramont, organized festivities, balls, concerts, hunting parties, and picnics. The temperamental Queen enlivened the Court *soirées* at Versailles and Fontainebleau by arranging costume ballets and other festivities. She was always inventing something fresh, particularly at the Petit Trianon, that delightful refuge, which bore the stamp of her personality. When Louis XV died, and the Trianon was no longer used by Mme du Barry, because she had to leave the Court, Marie-Antoinette asked her husband to give her the palace as a country residence. Louis XVI is said to have replied: "Madame, this beautiful spot has always been the favourite residence of the King's favourites: it shall therefore also be yours." Louis XVI was no phrase-maker, and would never have said this, because he hated his grandfather's mistresses, particularly the last, but he certainly made the Petit Trianon over to his wife. She accepted



LA DISPUTE DE LA ROSE
Colour-print by J. Eymar after L.-I. Boilly
About 1795

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the gift with the greatest joy, and it became her favourite residence.

She had great social gifts, and was not only an amiable, but a very generous hostess. When the future Paul I of Russia and his wife visited the French Court in the spring of 1782 the most brilliant receptions and entertainments took place at Versailles, Fontainebleau, and the Trianon. Marie-Antoinette devised new surprises every day for the young Archduchess. At Sèvres the Russian guests admired among other things a beautiful dressing-table set of lapis-blue china mounted with gold, a masterpiece of French porcelain-manufacture. The Archduchess Maria was enthusiastic, and cried out that she was sure it must have been made for the Queen. Imagine her surprise when she drew nearer, and found on all the pieces belonging to the set her own arms and initials! A present from Marie-Antoinette! On the following day the Queen surprised her guest with another gift no less costly. The Archduchess Maria and Marie-Antoinette were sitting together in the charming little theatre at Versailles. "It seems to me," suddenly said the Queen to the Archduchess, "that you are just as short-sighted as I am. But I assist my eyes with a small *lorgnette* discreetly arranged in my fan. Try it, and see if you can see better with it." Thereupon she handed her her fan, richly decorated with diamonds and other precious stones, and in which a *lorgnette* was hidden. By a graceful movement of this fan it could be used as a pair of opera-glasses, without attracting attention to the defective sight of a beautiful woman. The Archduchess was enchanted with this invention, and was allowed to keep the costly treasure. Marie-Antoinette delighted and gave pleasure to all her guests in this free-handed manner.

The Court ceremonial had bored her even when she was Dauphine, and now that she was Queen she wanted to free herself as much as possible from its wearying round of duties. She loved nature, intimacy, free and unrestrained sociability,

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and found a spot, only a few steps away from the ceremonious stiffness of Versailles, where she could indulge all her tastes. Trianon was to replace for her the life of her girlhood in Schönbrunn. All etiquette was to be banned from it. This fancy did her more harm with her subjects than anything else—more than her love of finery, more than her frivolity and heedlessness, more than her spendthrift ways. For at the Trianon festivities, which many contemporaries and historians, particularly Mercier and the Prince de Ligne, refer to as 'orgies,' the Comte d'Artois was the master of ceremonies, and his bad reputation affixed itself to the place. Here the Queen thought she and her ladies could live and dress as they liked. As a rule they wore long cambric or muslin gowns falling in soft folds, with a lace *fichu* pinned at the breast, and large Florentine hats trimmed with ribbons and flowers. Hoops and diamonds, trains and whalebone corsets, were banned. But this simplicity in their Queen did not suit the Parisians either, although they had long grumbled at the costly jewels, at the expensive silks for the countless frills and *ruches* of the hoops, at the priceless real lace, at the flowers and ribbons, at the headdresses, growing ever higher and more pretentious, and blamed Marie-Antoinette alone for all these follies of fashion. Although they could not find enough insults to hurl at her for her superficiality and extravagance, now they were just as ready to jibe at her taste for simplicity. When she was first seen dressed as a shepherdess, and when appeared the first pictures by Mme Vigée-Lebrun of the Queen in this delightful costume, the Parisians sneered: "The Queen dresses like a serving-maid." Others said, because her dress was only of cambric or muslin, "I suppose she wants to ruin the Lyons silk industry. For if she does not wear silk any more, other ladies will not buy it either." Marie-Antoinette could never please the French, whether she was dressed simply or extravagantly.

Naturally the ladies of the Court did not give up their

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extravagant tastes even at the Trianon; simplicity was not always the watchword. Frau von Oberkirch, for instance, says that in the year 1782 she attended there the most brilliant ball she had ever known. The most marvellous costumes of the whole season were worn on this occasion, and from six o'clock in the morning her maid was busy arranging her hair and dressing her, in order to have the complicated Court *toilette* and *coiffure* completed by the evening. She relates :

I was experimenting at that time with a very modern but extremely uncomfortable *coiffure*. For the latest invention of fashion was to wear little tubes filled with water arranged in the hair, so that all the live flowers used to decorate it might remain fresh. It is true this was not always successful, but, when it was, it gave the charming effect of early spring, with fresh flowers pushing their heads through the snow of the powdered hair.

It is obvious that the ladies decked out in this way had to hold their heads very stiffly if they were not to run the risk of raining on their neighbours. Marie-Antoinette also wore one of these *coiffures* on the occasion in question, but particular envy was felt of another lady of the Court for her very unusual mode of hairdressing. She wore in her hair a small gaily coloured bird made of precious stones, which at every movement hopped up and down, for it was attached to a fresh rose by a wire, so that it appeared to be hovering perpetually about the head of its lovely wearer. There were even more fantastic sights than this. Gaston Maugras, the biographer of Lauzun, says : "These fantastic fashions seemed particularly to please Mme de Lauzun." She had had smallpox, and appeared in Society again for the first time at Mme du Deffant's with a noteworthy *coiffure*.

This erection depicted a complete landscape in relief : a stormy sea, with ducks swimming by the shore, and a hunter on the point of shooting the ducks. At the apex of the *coiffure* was a mill, with the miller's wife allowing herself to be courted by a gallant priest, and at the bottom, beneath the ear, stood the miller leading an ass by the halter.

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This amazing allegory was admired and laughed at, not merely for its originality, but, above all, because of its reference to the gallant character of the Duchesse, who in this way admitted her illicit escapades. There were, however, other *coiffures* very different from that of the Duchesse de Lauzun, in which an erotic hint was conveyed in broader fashion.

It goes without saying that with such complicated *coiffures* elegant ladies could not pay much attention to cleanliness of the head and hair. Indeed, very little consideration was given to personal hygiene in the eighteenth century. The hair was very rarely washed, perhaps once a year or even not at all. Elaborate *coiffures* were expected to last for weeks, even months, and it was no rare occurrence for vermin to nest in these monstrous edifices of hair and to attack their owners in a terrible way. Elegant women were not allowed to scratch themselves, although very pretty *gratte-tête* were made. But these could be used only in private—such, at least, was the custom at the French Court. At the Court of Catherine II certainly it was different. There ladies were allowed to scratch their heads without embarrassment if they felt an itching under their *coiffures*.

The boudoirs and bedrooms of these elegant queens, princesses, and fine ladies, although furnished with every refinement of taste and every extravagance of luxury, left much to be desired as regards cleanliness. The royal palaces, rich with tapestries, gilding, and works of art, were none the less extremely dirty and ill-kept, not only during the reign of Louis XIV, but also a hundred years later, at the period of Marie-Antoinette. The Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Teschen were amazed and horrified when, on paying a private visit to Marie-Antoinette at Versailles, they found the stairs and corridors, and even the rooms of the palace, filled with a very foul smell and covered with unspeakable dirt. The stairs in particular were covered with every kind of refuse. Even Liselotte relates that in her time ladies, with their elegant satin and brocade



RIDING COSTUME
Parisian fashion plate. 1798

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

shoes and their long, costly Court dresses and trains, had to walk on tiptoe over the puddles and dirt, with their skirts lifted high. Many of the corridors and stairs at the Court of Louis XIV were used as conveniences, and no attempt seems to have been made to put a stop to these vile habits. As she was not accustomed to hygiene and cleanliness, the most pampered woman did not notice the awful conditions in which she lived. All elegance was confined to outward appearance, and male and female were so much occupied with their love intrigues, their finery and fripperies, their paints and scents and lotions, that cleanliness was forgotten or neglected. The half-hearted efforts of Marie-Antoinette to bring a little hygiene into the customs of the Court were a failure, and only gave rise to censure.

In everything she had lost favour with the Parisians. She was universally considered as frivolous, superficial, fond of finery, and eager for admiration, although her extravagance and coquetry, her love of luxury and pleasure, were by no means unusual in her period. This elegant young Queen, the last of the *ancien régime*, had to atone for her faults, few compared with the great crimes committed against the nation by the French Court throughout its existence, by death on the scaffold.

On her last sad journey, in the tumbril, to the place of execution, all the glory and brilliance of the once beautiful Queen were gone. She was an old woman, broken by hardship and sorrow. Absorbed in her own thoughts, she sat on one of the benches of the cart. Her hands were bound together with a rope, which the executioner held. She wore a white muslin shawl and a morning dress of white *piqué* over a shabby black petticoat. On her hair, which she herself had cut short, and which had turned grey in the days and nights of the Terror, was a white cambric hood, framing her deathly white, exhausted face. Such was the last *toilette* of the once beautiful and elegant Queen Marie-Antoinette.

CHAPTER VI

NYMPHS AND MERVEILLEUSES

THE ninth of Thermidor brought an end to the Reign of Terror. The fear of anything luxurious in apparel or habits, and, above all, the fear of appearing to be rich, or even possessed of any kind of property, had disappeared. The French, and particularly the Parisians, as though awakened from a bad dream, flung themselves into a mad whirl of pleasure. There was no longer any need to be exclusively concerned with anxiety for one's life. Death no longer lurked in every corner, and the sight of death was no longer the only diversion allowed to the nation. Public and private pleasures were no longer subject to a tyrannical censorship. To be rich was no longer a crime. People moved about more freely and unrestrainedly, entertained one another at table, and no longer felt it necessary to make a display of Republican spirit by carelessness and neglect of outward appearances. The hoop and powdered hair of the *ancien régime* had disappeared a short time before the Revolution, but the actual revolution in fashion and female elegance dates only from 1793. The ninth of Thermidor was the day of victory for women.

A new epoch had begun, bringing with it a new society—a society whose craving for the pleasures of life was enhanced by its previous privations and terrors. It was built on the ruins of the Terror, and was made up of a mixture of people of the old *régime* and of the new governing class with its more or less republican tendency. Once more appeared rich *bourgeois*, side by side with the financial aristocracy and the remnants of the true aristocracy of the Faubourg

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Saint-Germain. But now they were masters, and the aristocrats were compelled to solicit their protection. The nobility was played out, and the *bourgeoisie* ruled in its stead. Not Saint-Germain, but the Chaussée d'Antin was now the scene of splendour and display. The stiff etiquette of the *ancien régime* had given place to an unrestrained sociability. This unrestraint soon, however, deteriorated into licentiousness, and society under the Directory was one wild scramble for wealth and notoriety. It was the Golden Age of the stock-jobber, the *cocotte*, and the profiteer. The institution of marriage, which had been proscribed under the Revolution, revived again, but many more marriages were dissolved than formerly. The Goncourts give a vivid picture of this new world in their *Société française sous le Directoire*, a book which it is impossible to read without realizing how much resemblance there is between the France of that time and our own post-War society. The comparison is indeed so obvious that it leaps to the eye.

Public promenades, public gardens, public balls, were the *salons* of the Directory, *salons* of equality, open in some cases to those who paid, and in others to anyone who liked to come. Parties are no longer intimate family affairs, but feasts of fraternity! Rank and caste no longer exist. People enjoy themselves freely and in public. Society is only at home when it is not at home. The real *salon* is in the streets, the public dance-halls, and the places of amusement in the Champs-Élysées, even in Montmartre, whence every evening innumerable fireworks are let off over Paris. A woman is no longer that over-sensitive, delicate, artificial creature who can do nothing in public that might appear to be unwomanly or indelicate. She eats, drinks, dances to her heart's content, and enjoys herself just as men do, with a freedom surpassing anything in former ages. Young girls dance with anyone who chooses to ask them. Actresses and the wives of Directors, worthy women of the *bourgeoisie* and notorious *cocottes*, move side by side in the same circle of society.

The woman of the Directory seems to have materialized her soul, to have brutalized her heart. There are no more tender solicitations on the part of the men, nor any embarrassment on

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the part of the ladies in conducting a love affair. Everything is straightforward. From the men direct offers and frank proposals, without any wooing, quick acquiescence from the women. A union often for a few hours, for a night. Then a parting, without a scruple. There is no forbidden fruit in this paradise. The cry is: "I want you—you want me—we want each other. When we no longer like each other we will part." For those who have incautiously bound themselves by marriage there is speedy divorce. The woman of the Directory takes life as it comes. She ties or unties her girdle to suit herself. She is a wife so long as it does not bore her, a mother so long as she finds it entertaining. In the bacchanalian night clubs which have opened in Paris since the ninth of Thermidor men fly from one beautiful woman to another. They are divorced for a mere nothing: they marry only to be divorced again, marry again, and are divorced three and four times.

Woman reigns again, but her reign is different from that of the dainty Rococo lady, for now nothing is hidden; the element of the mysterious has disappeared from feminine coquetry. This tendency was manifested even in outward appearances. The *merveilleuses* and the nymphs of the Directory displayed an exaggeration and extravagance in their elegance which has kept their name alive. Anything Greek or Roman was in fashion, and too many mistook the merely nude for the really classical. Dresses were worn with no sleeves, displaying the bare arms; the shoe gave place to the cothurnus, or, better still, to a mere sole with straps. Petticoats and chemises were discarded, and *sans-chemises* became the echo of *sans-culottes*. The breasts were pressed up by a kind of bust-bodice, and were sometimes quite bare, without any neckerchief or *fichu*. The corset, which had a short time ago played so big a part, fell out of fashion; it was even denounced by politicians in the Assembly as "injurious to the nation," and its abolition was urged. Mme Hamelin carried the craze for scanty raiment so far that she appeared on the streets one day in nothing but a robe of tulle. Sometimes those who interpreted Greek fashions with too literal a daring were attacked by the indignant public; but this occurred very rarely.



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The *Journal de luxe et des modes* describes the costumes of the *merveilleuses* of that day, when they did not decide to be quite naked under their chemise-like robes, as "half-naked in the full sense of the word." The Parisienne appears in flesh-coloured stockinet tights with lilac clocks and garters. Over this she wears a mere chemise, hanging from the bare shoulders by narrow ribbons, showing the whole body completely. Not only women appeared like this, but even young girls, and it was not the *demi-mondaine* who was the most daring; respectable ladies excelled her in the display of nakedness. Moreck says it is no longer

the dress which drapes the body and entices the eye to glimpse its charms, half hidden amid lace and ribbons; the body itself is the dominating element, displaying its curves through a veil of shimmering, often entirely transparent material. Whereas hitherto women had attracted men by half displaying throat or ankle, now they relied on the *tout ensemble*, which was almost the same thing as what the Victorians called the altogether.

The new freedom brought in by the Revolution allowed women to appear not only at balls and at the theatre, at parties and in the so-called *bureaux d'esprit*, where they mixed with men of letters and politicians, but also in the public gardens and promenades, where they revealed themselves, in the summer, half naked under the dark trees, in shrubberies and grottoes, by the fountains and cascades illuminated with thousands of lanterns of all imaginable colours. Women displayed, as so often in ages of licence, a remarkable mixture of naturalness and affectation. Their frank physical display contrasted strangely with the high ideals it was the fashion to express. A republican sentimentality went hand in hand with an intoxicating freedom of morals.

The most elegant women in Directory Society were Mme Tallien, Mme de Beauharnais, and later the lovely Juliette Récamier and Mme Laura Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely. The leader of fashion and extravagance, however, was the first

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named—Thérèse Cabarrus, the divorced Marquise de Fontenay, Tallien's mistress, and later his wife. It was thanks to her influence on her lover that the downfall of the Dictator Robespierre, ascetic and woman-hater, was accomplished, and she had the whole of emancipated France at her feet. The most extravagant homage was paid to her, under the name of "Notre Dame de Thermidor." She retained this reputation of angel of deliverance and good fairy even when she had long ceased to be the wife of Tallien, but was doing the honours at the Luxembourg as mistress of the young Director Barras. Popular wit dubbed her "Propriété du Gouvernement"—indeed, a wag even succeeded on one occasion in fastening a label to the hem of her dress with the inscription: "National property. Do not damage." Her provoking beauty and unbelievable daring, both in manners and in dress, set the tone in this new Society; and her *salon* in the Chaumière was the rallying ground for all the famous and notorious personalities of the period. She succeeded in gathering round her a circle of beautiful and pleasing women, noted, as she was herself, for their elegance, eccentricity, and easy morals. Among them were ladies of the earlier nobility whom the Revolution had turned into adventuresses, and who now lived by their wits: Mme de Navailles, Mme de Beauharnais—whose husband had died on the scaffold, and who shared with Mme Tallien the favour of Barras until General Bonaparte made her his wife—the wife of the deputy Rovère, Mme de Forbin, Mme de Châteaurenault, Mme Récamier, Mme Hamelin, Mme Laura Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely. All these ladies helped the beautiful Thérèse to attract the men with whose assistance she hoped to make of her *salon* a centre not only of political, but also of social influence. These women were young, beautiful, eager for enjoyment, and entirely without prudery. Some of them were not far removed from courtesans, like Thérèse herself. Mme Hamelin was in no way behind her in boldness, and the beautiful Laura Regnault de



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Saint-Jean-d'Angely was notoriously free with her favours. Isabey painted an exquisite miniature of her in which Laura is wearing nothing but a garland of flowers falling from her head and veiling her whole body. When she showed this picture at one of her parties under the Consulate and then left it lying carelessly on a table, one of the guests secretly wrote under it the witticism: "It's yours for the asking."

At Thérèse's house the politicians of the day carried on their intrigues, army-contractors completed business deals, bankers discussed their speculations, officers intrigued for promotion—in short, every man and woman who had any share in public life at that desperate period met at Mme Tallien's. It was probably in her *salon* that the conspiracy of the thirteenth of Vendémiaire was arranged.

Love affairs were begun and ended at the Chaumière, and those who did not come to Thérèse for love, politics, or business came to admire her true classic beauty, her grace, her elegance, and her unbounded extravagance. She allowed herself liberties which were considered shocking even in those days. She did not hesitate to show her naked beauty not merely to her two lovers the Director Barras and the banker Ouvard or in her own house, but, holding herself above all criticism, she exhibited herself in the street, in the theatre, and wherever she went, for the satisfaction of curious and covetous eyes. It was a necessity for her to challenge the world, and particularly the world of men. Did she not on one occasion appear in her box at the opera as Diana in classic nudity, clothed only in a tiger skin? Or, again, at the Bal de Frascati dressed *à la sauvage* in flesh-coloured tights and a transparent over-garment? Her Greek costume caused a sensation even in *blasé* Paris. It consisted of a sleeveless tunic of white silk, under which she wore neither chemise nor any other under-garment, not even tights, which had been introduced by the more decent women who adopted this fashion.

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She was quite naked under the soft white silk. Her motto was "A woman is clothed best in nakedness." As she walked, the garment, which was slit up the sides, opened to show her bare thighs. On her arms, hands, fingers, ankles, and even on her toes she wore costly rings. These rings on her toes were meant, so she said, to hide the scars which she had retained from rat bites when she was in prison during the Terror; but even ladies who had not been imprisoned followed this fashion, with no other excuse than their coquetry. Her naked feet were in antique sandals, constructed simply of thin soles with high heels and straps. The Grecian costume of the nymphs and *merveilleuses* took only its name from antiquity, having nothing in common with it. It was not meant, as was the clothing of the elegant Greek women of antiquity, to cover, but to uncover, and Mme Tallien made the most generous use of it. She was beautiful and conscious of her beauty. Tall and slender and of wonderfully symmetrical build, she towered over most women of her circle. She curled her jet-black hair in the Grecian fashion, or, following the mode of the period, wore a blond or red wig. Her black hair encircled her lovely delicate face like a frame of ebony. Her large and lovely eyes gleamed, her small sensual mouth smiled confidently at all the admiring glances offered in tribute to her beauty by the mob of young fops, *muscadins*, and *incroyables* who surrounded her. When she drove along the Promenade de Petit Coblence in her ox-blood-coloured carriage, decked out like a *hetæra*, and half-naked under the flimsy materials of her garments, she was followed by an admiring throng, and received their homage like a goddess. She knew well the power of her beauty over men, and smiled back as they gazed at her through their *lorgnettes*. Sometimes, however, she had to put up with sarcastic remarks. One day, walking along the street, her breast bared, and decorated with flowers and diamonds, she was followed by an impudent *muscadin*. When she asked him, "What do you

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mean, sir, by staring at me so?" he replied, "I am not staring at you, madame—I am merely looking at the Crown jewels."

Thérèse's physical attributes seem to have been created for seduction. She was a born *hetæra*. Her greatest power lay in the conquest of men—of those republicans who, although they might have overthrown the *ancien régime*, were just as much subject to the spell of love as the courtiers they had displaced. Did not Danton himself, when he was accused of conspiracy, admit, with an almost naïve conviction of his innocence: "What, I? That is impossible. How can a man be capable of conspiracy who every night is passionately engaged in love?" One glance from Thérèse's eyes was enough to make these men her slaves, and Thérèse Tallien reigned the queen of frivolity, a true Calypso, as Lucien Bonaparte called her. The Duchesse d'Abrantès says of her:

She was more beautiful than the statues of Phidias: she had the same purity of features, the same perfection of arms and hands and feet, and the whole of her being was irradiated by the sweetness of her expression, which was, as it were, the mirror of her soul, reflecting everything that passed within her.

She was in fact extraordinarily benevolent, particularly toward the outcasts and pariahs of society, and if Josephine Beauharnais later received the name of "Notre Dame des Victoires" the beautiful and compassionate Tallien deserved still more the title of "Notre Dame de Bon Secours."

She had but one rival in beauty: Mme Récamier—although even she could never put Thérèse Tallien in the shade. She was much too modest. But these two women were admittedly the most beautiful and elegant of Directory Society. The first time they met there was a dramatic little scene. At a private gathering, where Mme Tallien had hitherto always been acclaimed as the most beautiful, Juliette Récamier appeared one day with her lovely seductive face, her soft supple figure, her refined simplicity. Mme Tallien at once felt the menace of

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the new rival. She rose hastily, flung off the flame-coloured shawl which she was wearing round her shoulders, and stood in all her beauty beside Mme Récamier. Her marvellous figure, her bare arms, her grace, that perfection of beauty possessed by but few women, attracted attention and were admired—even by Récamier. Juliette's modest elegance and naïve amiability made no pretension of quenching the glory which Thérèse Tallien spread around her, and very soon the two women were the best of friends. Mme Récamier was the ideal of "the republicans thirsting for Spartan virtues," and the painter David, in his famous picture, has immortalized her in an attitude of classical simplicity. She is reclining on a mahogany divan in the style of the period, with a few silk bolsters as cushions. Her feet and arms are naked. Her lovely slender body is clothed only in a flimsy white garment like a chemise. Her hair is short, curled *à la Titus*, and bound with a fillet. Her face expresses tenderness, softness, sensibility, and an almost childlike modesty. The whole figure breathes grace and naturalness. She is in a half-lying, half-sitting posture—the posture and dress in which the ladies of the Directory received their guests, for the morning receptions in bed and in the bath, popular during the *ancien régime*, were now out of favour.

Mme Récamier and Mme Tallien were queens not only of beauty, but of fashion. Thibaudeau, in his memoirs, ascribes to them the chief influence in the changes which took place in society after the ninth of the month Thermidor.

Once more Paris won for herself the mastery of fashion and taste. Two women, famed for their beauty, Mme Tallien and, a little later, Mme Récamier, set the tone. It was they who accomplished the revolution in the manners and customs of private life which had begun politically in 1789. The antique, which had already been introduced into art by David, now banished from the clothing and *coiffures* of women, and even from furniture, all the bizarre and feudal notions and the terrible mixture of forms which the slavery of the French courts had introduced.



FRENCH COSTUME

"Modes et Manières du Jour." Etching by P.-L. Debucourt
1801

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The Goncourts lead us into the Chaussée d'Antin, the quarter where the luxurious orgies of the new millionaires took place, and where Récamier had bought for his delightful wife from the Finance Minister, Necker, one of the loveliest palaces. Later she owned many others. Her house was furnished throughout in the style of the new period. The furniture was almost all of mahogany. The Goncourts call Mme Récamier's house a Pompeii, from which neither bronze candelabra nor marble statues were missing. Her bedroom was a veritable vision of antiquity. Two swans of gilt bronze over the head of the bed held in their beaks a garland of the same material. The immense mirror opposite the bed was framed in mahogany with fine gold lines. The *portières* were of fawn-coloured silk with gold embroidery, and fell gracefully over violet silk curtains which, in their turn, were draped over white muslin blinds. The composer Reichardt says that the walls were covered from top to bottom with mirrors, "the ethereal divine bed" reflected therein with its fragrant coverlets and cushions of flimsy white Indian muslin. When Mme Récamier lay in bed she could observe her beauty completely in the mirror, "from the top of her head to the tips of her toes," says Reichardt, a trifle naïvely. The bathroom of the lovely Juliette, which was close beside her bedroom, was furnished with equal luxury. An enormous mirror covered one wall almost entirely. Strange to say, the other walls were covered in thick corded silk (*gros de Tours*), which cannot have been very satisfactory in a bathroom, on account of the rising steam. "The bath," continues Reichardt, "placed in a niche of mirrors was made yesterday into a charming sofa upholstered in red morocco, and the armchairs in the bathroom were covered with the same material." Even in this period, therefore, it would seem that daily baths were not usual, since Mme Récamier's bath when not in use was turned into a sofa, a proceeding which must have taken some time and could certainly not have happened every day. If we follow

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the chroniclers still further we learn that beside the bathroom was Mme Récamier's boudoir,

completely tapestried in fine thick *gros de Tours*, as was also the sofa, which took up the width of the room. Disguised doors led from here to the dressing-rooms and the rooms of the ladies' maids. Beautifully painted and ornamented ceilings, with costly argand lamps suspended from the beams, and arranged on high candelabra in the corners, enhanced the effect. The window curtains were all double and of two colours.

Luxurious furnishing of this kind was not confined to the houses in the Chaussée d'Antin. The Récamiers were certainly rich, but they were not among the richest, and Juliette's husband, who was a banker, had made his fortune before the Revolution. He was old enough to be her father, and some of her biographers declare that he was so in fact, that she was his illegitimate daughter, and that he married her only in order to ensure that she inherited his fortune. This would explain why she had no physical relations with him, for it was common knowledge that their feelings toward each other were of friendship only. Juliette could easily have followed the example of Mme du Deffant and thrown herself into the arms of a lover. She certainly did not lack wooers, but even the *Chronique scandaleuse* cannot find a single slip to attribute to her during the Directory. And yet she was the friend of the most licentious women of the period, Thérèse Tallien and Josephine Beauharnais, to whom many love affairs were attributed. Was she one of those women who, under the hypocritical mask of virtue, can hide the greatest crimes? Was she, as Arsène Houssaye says, "one of the neo-Greeks who, half-naked, but clothed by their sense of shame, rose from the ruins of a bloody Pompeii?" At any rate, in the Society of the Directory and the Consulate she denied herself no pleasure, and took part in everything which was fashionable and likely to create attention. She was officially one of the "three Graces" of the Directory, and her name is always mentioned with those

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of Tallien and Josephine Beauharnais. All three of them drove half the men of Paris mad with their caprices, their extravagances, and their beauty. They were seen everywhere—at the concerts where the famous Garat sang, at the balls where the adored Trénitz danced. They were the centre of every festivity, at the theatre, in the gardens, in the streets, in the public dance-halls, the Thélusson, the Longueville, the Tivoli, and the Idalie.

The whole of contemporary society had been seized with a frantic passion for dancing, and everywhere in Paris arose dance-halls, with the oddest names. There was a “Bal des Zéphirs,” a “Bal des Tilleuls,” and many others. At the “Bal des Victimes” people greeted each other *à la victime*—that is to say, with an abrupt bend of the head, which was supposed to imitate the movement of one condemned to death at the moment when the executioner placed the head under the guillotine. To this dance-hall only those were admitted who had lost near relatives, parents, or brothers and sisters on the scaffold. Friends or distant members of the family did not count. Such frivolity is almost incredible after so recent a reign of terror. There was even a *coiffure à la victime*, with the hair brushed forward from the nape of the neck, but this fashion was superseded by *coiffures à la Titus* or *à la Caracalla*. The flame-coloured, very modern Indian shawl worn by ladies was supposed to be reminiscent of the shawl which the executioner threw over Charlotte Corday’s shoulders before she mounted the scaffold. Many carried this frivolous game so far as to wear a very thin red band round the neck, as if to show where the head had been severed from the body.

In all the dance-halls a very mixed company assembled: elegant ladies, adventuresses, *grisettes*, former aristocrats, milliners, dressmakers, worthy *bourgeoises*, and the most notorious courtesans. A curious parallel with our own time is provided by the fact that the most popular band, especially at the “Bal

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de l'Élysée Nationale," in the former Palais Bourbon, was that of the negro Julien, and the music provided, although not exactly jazz, was sufficiently strange and ear-piercing to horrify old-fashioned dancers. Such a frenzy of dancing had never been known in Paris as was now seen at the "Frascati," at the "Pavillon de Hanovre," at the "Bal de Marbeuf," and at the "Tivoli." In the centre of the town a "Bal de la Veillée" was opened, which became later the famous Prado, and here was provided for the dancers an actual cats' chorus. Behind the lid of a clavichord sat about twenty cats, whose heads only could be seen, and whose tails were twisted, so that they let out the most miserable cries. The 'music' thus produced, in spite of the cruelty involved, was extremely popular, and the hall was always overcrowded with dancing couples. A somewhat better but even more frivolous company assembled at the Hôtel Longueville. Here a great part was played by the bold-faced Mme Hamelin, and by hundreds of perfumed ladies in delicate, soft, clinging, transparent dresses—*dés-habillés à la Vénus*—who whirled round to the gentle strains of the violinist Hulin. The dancing-room was surrounded with mirrors in which were reflected all these swaying bodies, this rosy flesh, these laughing faces excited by the dance. It is curious that even at private parties negro musicians were preferred. At a ball which Mme Récamier gave in her house, and to which the composer Reichhardt was invited, a black cellist played. In a letter to his wife Reichhardt remarks:

Before I end my description I must mention the dance music, which was beautifully played by a Moor with a violin. . . . So much is thought of the black musician, and it is so fashionable among the rich to have him at their balls, that for the three or four hours of the night—for these assemblies do not begin until midnight—he often gets as much as twelve *louis d'or*.

As well as violinists the new rich engaged other entertainers for their balls, particularly comedians or *cabaret* artists, whose chief duty was to ridicule the manners and costumes of the



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guests, at least of those who were amiable, or not too powerful to be offended. Juliette Récamier, however, did not make use of these coarse entertainers at her parties, which, in spite of the fury of the dancing, were noted for their refinement and good taste.

She herself danced very well, particularly in the famous scarf dance, which she performed with her two friends Thérèse Tallien and Josephine de Beauharnais, all (as the wits would have it) "dressed to give pleasure to God," so much did they appear to be undressed. Their dresses were of gauze or cotton; on their bare feet they wore cothurnuses, with the graceful cross-bands round their slim ankles, and over their arms they carried a scarf. Arsène Houssaye relates :

As soon as the violins began they were seen proceeding solemnly toward the scene of their dance. With this graceful scarf they took up sometimes the most sensual, sometimes the most modest postures, draping the light material about their figures. Sometimes it was a veil to hide the lover or the lover's passion, sometimes a drapery beneath which they sought to protect their threatened chastity, sometimes merely a girdle, the girdle of Venus, clasped by the hands of the Graces to be unfastened by the fingers of Love.

The sensation which this dance created was almost unbelievable, for even at the opera there was nothing like it, and no entertainment in Paris was so much relished. Often the three dancers, half dead with fatigue, would be carried into an adjoining room, accompanied by a crowd of their admirers. The other ladies of the company, too, often looked pale as death, partly from excessive dancing and partly because, as Reichardt says, somewhat spitefully, "many beautiful women at this period drew attention to their lost virginity by no longer wearing rouge."

Mme Récamier was more decent and more refined in her dress than the bold Thérèse Tallien. She never wore diamonds; nothing but pearls suited the studied simplicity of

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her attire. Her whole appearance bore the stamp of sweetness. She was attractive rather than dazzling; her beauty was of the kind which improves on acquaintance. Her charm was inexpressible. Reichhardt observed her at one of her *assemblées* in the Chaussée d'Antin, and was overpowered by her charm and her grace. He saw her dance "in a dress of white satin and fine Indian materials, very much cut away, especially at her beautiful neck and back." Her complexion was "absolutely transparent," so "that you can see the blood flowing in her veins. But she is more white than red. In her bearing and her whole personality she has a quite individual, naïve, and almost childish charm." Mme Lenormand describes her as a young girl of eighteen, and says that she had an amazingly slender and elegant figure. Her shoulders and neck were marvellously shaped and proportioned. A small red mouth, teeth like pearls, beautiful arms, chestnut hair naturally curly, a delicate, regular nose, an incomparably lovely complexion, which had no need of rouge, a completely innocent expression, which could sometimes be roguish, and a certain indolence and pride in the bearing of her head made Mme Récamier an extraordinarily attractive creature. Modern students, such as Moreck, call her "the woman who, remembering the Rococo period only as a child, brought a faint breath of its grace into a new and different world." Others, however, thought her amiability assumed and her candour affected, and hinted that she was not so virtuous as she liked to appear. Baron Trémont knew her when she was at the zenith of her feminine beauty, when she was creating the greatest sensation in Paris, and all the papers were full of her charms. He observes:

It was impossible to have a more beautiful face than hers. But, with all its loveliness, the features were those of a *grisette* rather than of a lady of the nobility. Her expression, however, had nothing in common with the expression of a *grisette's* face. It was extraordinarily modest, but her face had not, as was always claimed, the purity of a Raphael Madonna. There was something

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very affected about her, and one could see that she was determined to please at all costs . . . her eyes were beautiful, but they lacked soul. Her complexion was marvellous. She had chestnut hair, not very abundant, but silky.

This describes Mme Récamier at twenty. Later she developed greater physical beauty. Her figure became fuller, and she had wonderful breasts which several famous sculptors have immortalized, among others Chinard. There was one statue which showed particularly well the beauty of her breasts, and when Juliette Récamier grew old and observed the decline of her own physical beauty she had this part of the statue broken, because she did not wish to be reminded that all beauty is transitory. It is tragic to think that so lovely a woman should have been destroyed by one of the most terrible of all diseases. She died of cholera, when the epidemic was raging in Paris, in the year 1849.

The fashionable dictatorship of Mme Tallien and Mme Récamier was shared by the creole beauty Josephine de Beauharnais. As the wife of the aristocrat Alexandre de Beauharnais she was imprisoned for a long period during the Reign of Terror, and had her portion of tears, misery, dirt, crime, and depravity. Small wonder then that she too plunged passionately into the new life, which transported the whole of France into a whirl of enjoyment. Stronger characters than hers went under in this whirlpool.

She made the acquaintance of Barras (not yet Director) at the house of Thérèse Tallien. Mme Tallien, it is true, was the mistress of his senses and his purse, but as a connoisseur of feminine beauty he took a fancy to the charming Vicomtesse de Beauharnais, with her mixture of French elegance and creole indolence. Thérèse raised no objection. She consoled herself with others. The two women were amazingly sympathetic, and seemed to be made for each other. Both were beautiful, although the youth and beauty of Mme Tallien far surpassed Josephine's; both were extraordinarily good-tempered,

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pleasure-seeking, extravagant, elegant, and spoiled—and both were always on the look-out for a man, whether as husband or lover, whose money might satisfy all their needs.

Josephine Beauharnais particularly was a spendthrift, and, however much money she had, had never enough. With debts piled on debts, she was driven to find her salvation in love. Even in times of famine she gave the most gorgeous dinners and parties, and bought herself Indian shawls, the most extravagant *toilettes*, and silk stockings at 500 francs a pair. Money ran through her fingers like water. Her dresses alone, which made her one of the most elegant women of Paris, swallowed colossal sums. It is true she possessed only six chemises and two pairs of drawers, but these articles of clothing were of no importance, for they were never used. Instead she had an immense number of Grecian tunics, Turkish dolmans, *toques à la Suisse*, sandals, Indian shawls, scarves, and turbans trimmed with pearls and aigrettes, for a Persian ambassador, who had come to Paris, had introduced an Oriental fashion in head-gear. Like Mme Tallien, she wore on her morning promenade, even when a cold wind was blowing—or more especially then—a thin white cambric dress, which outlined the contours of her figure in transparent folds. Napoleon liked white cambric dresses, and when other fashions had long held sway in Paris he wanted Josephine, when she was Empress, to wear nothing but these delicate materials. A yellow or pale pink cambric shawl was worn over the shoulders. On her head she wore only a simple hood of muslin trimmed with sequins; delicate lace fell over her brow, and red sandals with red straps completed this morning promenade costume. In the afternoon she assumed a gown cut on Greek lines, which, in the taste of the period, was called *robe à la Galatée*, *robe à la Diane*, *robe à la Vestale*, *à l'Omphale*, or *à la Minerve*. This too was made of white cambric, of tulle, or of soft flowing silk, and it always left the bosom bare. The bodice was softly draped, and in walking the flimsy skirt was gracefully held up high so that



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the legs were seen, either naked or clothed in delicate silk stockings or tights. Later, even Josephine Beauharnais discarded the fashion of transparent dresses, and adopted the Egyptian fashion, which for a period, during her husband's Egyptian campaign, ruled the minds of the beauties of the Directory. There were spencers à l'Algérienne and *ficbus de Nil* in the wardrobes of all fashionable ladies.

Josephine's delight in ornaments was shared by all her contemporaries. "Jewels and ornaments were worn in excess on arms, fingers, neck, feet, as *bandeaux* in the hair, as *aigrettes* on turbans," says Uzanne, in his *La Française du siècle*. It is difficult to exaggerate the number of diamonds in daily use. Necklaces were so long that they reached down to the knees, or were caught up below the bosom with a brooch. Nearly all women possessed them and wore them at every opportunity. Whole rows of diamonds and other costly stones were wound round their necks. Belts were clasped with valuable gems. Real pearls were sewn on to the tulle dresses and into hats. When Josephine Bonaparte returned home from Italy as the wife of the victorious General she wore the rarest cameos on her dresses and the most costly diamonds in her hair and on her arms. But her splendour then was no greater than it had been when she was mistress of the Luxembourg and of Barras. When she first became acquainted with the latter she rented a charming house in the Rue Chantierine—now Rue de la Victoire—at 4000 francs a year, from the wife of the actor Talma. She kept carriages and horses, a coachman, a cook, a porter, and a chambermaid. Her *salon* was the meeting-place of the old and the new Society, and she was visited by the most important personages of all parties. The young General Bonaparte too came to her house, and among the many elegant women in their Greek dresses he admired particularly his hostess, the graceful creole, whose brown hair was shot with reddish glints and whose long lashes concealed such languorous eyes. True she was no longer in her first youth—she was

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thirty-three—but she knew how to make the best of her still attractive appearance, and Bonaparte fell genuinely and passionately in love with her. The uncouth young Corsican was enchanted by her sophistication; she held him completely enslaved. She intoxicated the young General by her luxurious refinement, her interesting personality, her soft melodious voice, and her half-indolent, half-passionate glance. The fragrance of her hair, curled in Greek fashion, the olive skin of her bare shoulders and arms, the gold bangles on her wrists, her diamonds and pearls, the sensuous perfume which emanated from her—intoxicated him. He saw in her the great enchantress, who was able, as no other, to give him the passionate love he craved. She knew so well how to show her slender, supple body to advantage in soft, light, transparent materials. Her gestures were graceful and natural, and yet implied all the breeding of the *ancien régime*. Under the powder and rouge of her cheeks and lips Josephine Beauharnais looked as young and fresh as a woman of twenty. He desired her, he loved her, and Josephine was not made to be cruel. In the little house in the Rue Chantreine, in a room which was covered from floor to ceiling with looking-glass, Napoleon realized his dream of love with the woman he had wooed. Josephine became his wife, and rose with him to the dizzy heights of the imperial throne.

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THERE is an irresistible attraction in the study of the men and women of France and England in the eighteenth century. The people themselves, their manners and customs, have disappeared for ever, but Gainsborough's graceful women, Sir Joshua Reynolds' charming figures, and Romney's characteristic types have immortalized the reign of beauty in England during this period. The Duchess of Devonshire, Mrs Siddons, Mrs Robinson, Lady Anne Bingham, and Lady Hamilton—all these are unforgettable. These women incorporated the English ideal of beauty, and were the typical representatives of English elegance and English taste. It is true that they received their inspiration from France, for it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that English fashions began to impose themselves on the Continent. Luxury and extravagance, however, were as prevalent on the Thames as on the Seine, and English customs were more depraved, although more refined than in the seventeenth century, when a coarse brutality and a complete disrespect toward women were part of the dominant tone of society. This was changed in the century which followed. Even if there was no great respect for marriage, if adultery and rape were nothing out of the common, yet the eighteenth century did bring the beginning of that attention and courtliness toward women which still to-day are so pleasing a feature of life in England. This change, however, did not begin among the nobility, but among the *bourgeoisie*. In the highest circles, in England as elsewhere, men

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and women were demoralized, and divorces and scandalous lawsuits were frequent. Married women had lovers, and left their husbands to live with them, like Lady Craven with the Margrave of Ansbach, or Lady Sarah Bunbury with the Duc de Lauzun and Lord William Gordon. But there is adultery in every age and in every country. The remarkable thing is that in such an unscrupulous period matrimonial scandals created so great a sensation in London. The members of the nobility were themselves largely to blame for this, for they paraded their guilt openly. The wife of Sir Richard Worseley had been guilty of adultery no fewer than thirty-four times before her husband divorced her. Lord Frederick Baltimore had eight wives at once, and travelled all over the world with them, without shocking society unduly. Lord Tyrawley, the English Ambassador to the Portuguese Court, brought with him from Lisbon, in the year 1742, three wives, by whom he had fourteen children.

In England woman did not play quite the same part as in France, but her power was none the less real because it was more carefully concealed. Even when she was not beautiful, the assurance of manner and that nonchalance of bearing which seems to be inborn in every Englishwoman, be she of high or low birth, made her the centre of social life. Her extravagance and luxury exceeded even that of her sisters on the other side of the Channel. Archenholtz, a clever observer of English life, was greatly struck by the extravagance of the English woman, and declared that her main object in life seemed to be to squander as much money as possible on her clothes and the luxuries of her *toilette*. Unlike the French woman of the eighteenth century, who was often able to give the impression of extravagance by the skill with which she made use of cheap materials, the English woman had to have everything as expensive as possible and of faultless quality. The lady of the aristocracy and the actress showed the same tendency and had the same tastes, both striving for the same

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effect of dignity in their appearance and in their manners. The milliner's bill of a lady of rank sometimes amounted to as much as 500 guineas a year. Many elegant ladies, as, for example, the charming Duchess of Devonshire, whose beauty Gainsborough has preserved for us, gave ten guineas for one simple evening cap. Her famous feathered hats cost fortunes, and her dressmaker's bills were correspondingly high. Many great ladies employed a fashion adviser in all questions of the mode, and paid large fees for her help. Often these fashion-advisers belonged to high society, and wore dresses and hats once or twice themselves before passing them on to their clients or allowing them to be copied for a fee. In this way their elegance was made self-supporting.

The main influence on the mode, however, came from the theatre; it was the actresses and dancers who were the arbiters of elegance. According to Archenholtz the dresses of the actress Abington were always studied most carefully by the ladies in the audience, and she was certain to have her confectations imitated very quickly. Mrs Abington turned her fame as a queen of fashion to account by calling on the ladies of the aristocracy all over London and giving them advice in matters of dress and cosmetics. By this means she made an additional income of about £1500 to £1600 a year. Her own origin had been humble. As Fanny Barton, a poor flower-girl, she picked up her lovers on the street, until, by way of a house of ill-fame, she landed on the stage and became both a famous actress and a noted courtesan. She counted among her friends members of the highest ranks of the nobility, and excelled all their women-folk in elegance, luxury, and extravagance. Equally famous were Kitty Fisher and her inseparable friend Fanny Murray, who set a fashion in extravagance and elegance. When they appeared in public their smart carriages and thoroughbred horses drew all eyes. Their *toilettes* were always the latest and most daring examples of the fashion, and nothing was neglected to lend new charms to their physical beauty.

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When the 'paddies' first came into vogue they were at once taken up with enthusiasm by the ladies of the theatre, although this particular fashion in no way added to a woman's beauty or attractions. For, in addition to the hoop, which was worn much earlier in England than in France, English women had invented a remarkable device for 'improving' the figure. In 1750, and again in 1793, these artificial bellies were attached, producing, says Archenholtz,

a malformation which is seen only on women in a late stage of pregnancy. These strange devices were called pads and the small ones paddies; they were usually made of tin [imagine—tin!]—whence they received also the name of tin aprons. These artificial bellies met with great success, especially among unmarried women, which caused the wits to say that there had been a revolution in the signs of the zodiac and that the Twins had come too close to the Virgin. In every way these artificial bellies provided a weapon for scoffers, which they used unmercifully, and in the end brought pads into disrepute.

Such lack of taste, as might be prophesied, could not last long. The fashion came in in the winter of 1750, and by the spring of the following year it was forgotten, although it was revived for a time by the ladies of the Directory in France; but the French women wore cushions instead of tin frames, and very soon dropped even this foolish manner of destroying the figure. In Germany the fashion for artificial bellies was never popular, but a better welcome was given to the artificial bosom, which was also invented in England, and was made use of in the last years of the eighteenth century by those narrow-breasted English women who could not otherwise have adopted the half-naked Greek fashion then in vogue. These artificial bosoms were made of wax, and were faithful imitations of the natural form, but the beauties who made use of them had always to wear a flimsy veil over the bosom, in order that the deception should not be noticed.

Earlier than in France, long before the period of the



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Mezzotint. 1781

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Directory, English women wore the naked Greek fashions, and committed exactly the same follies and excesses in connexion with them as the coquettes of France.¹ Fat and thin alike, ugly and beautiful, the well-built and those to whom nature had been unkind—every woman considered that she was called upon to follow this fashion for nakedness, to let herself be seen in the fashionable parks and promenades, in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Bond Street, Pall Mall, and allow herself to be exposed to the curious glances of the men. The Englishwoman particularly loved to display her beauty and her eccentric clothing in the large and elegant shops of London.

The Englishwoman has always loved shopping. Even in the eighteenth century it played a great part in the life of the London lady, while in other countries it did not manifest itself until much later, for the very good reason that there were many more big shops in England even then than in France and Germany. Old and New Bond Street, particularly, were the paradise of the fashionable shoppers. Here the elegant world took its daily stroll, a habit which became even more marked at the beginning of the nineteenth century. On this point Wilhelm Bornemann remarks :

Here elegant ladies appear in different costumes for every hour of the day, changing them as simple folk do for the different seasons, displaying the latest creation of the restless world of fashion, buying and paying for everything twice and three times as much as would be charged in other parts of London. Everything must be bought in the shops of this renowned street if it is to find favour with refined taste.

Usually this strolling and shopping began about four o'clock in the afternoon, and was as great a necessity for the elegant Englishwoman as a visit to the opera was for the Frenchwoman.

¹ This is an exaggeration. I know of no recorded instance of an Englishwoman appearing in public with the breasts completely exposed, as happened in Paris under the Directory.—TRANSLATOR.

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The Englishwoman displayed her person in the dress *salons* and shops of Bond Street just as the Frenchwoman did in her box at night. There was yet a further excitement for the elegant shopper during her shopping. Wily shopkeepers employed in their shops handsome young men, who formed a great attraction for the feminine customers; and the pleasanter and more attractive the shopman, so much more custom did the ladies bring to the shop.

The eighteenth-century woman of fashion expended particular skill and care on her hat, as can be seen from the pictures of the great painters of the age. It was richly trimmed with ribbon and feathers, and Englishwomen understood particularly well how to put on and wear these becoming picturesque hats. One of the happiest fashions was a large floppy straw hat, called a Dunstable, from the name of the town where it was manufactured. The face of a beautiful woman looked even more attractive in such a frame. Hats of velvet, silk, and lace were also worn, and the colour was always in contrast to the colour of the dress. Hats had all kinds of strange names. After the fly-cap *à la Thérèse* the Ranelagh mob was the favourite. This was first worn by the elegant *demi-mondaines* in the pleasure-grounds of Ranelagh, but was soon after adopted by the fashionable world. It was made entirely of gauze or net, and the hanging ends were crossed under the chin and fastened at the back of the neck. Very famous also were the hats of Mrs Siddons, of the Duchess of Devonshire, with their ostrich feathers, of Lady Bingham, whom Reynolds painted in an immense hat, and of Lady Hamilton. In the letters of Lady Hamilton to her friend Greville the most important question of the *toilette* is always the hat, particularly a blue hat, of which she was very fond and which was admired by everybody.

Miss Farren, a very beautiful and well-known London actress, appeared once at a dinner in an enchanting pale green silk dress with a large black velvet hat in the Spanish style. From 1775 to about 1785 ostrich feathers were particularly

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fashionable both in England and in France, where they were worn by Marie-Antoinette herself. Many English women had as many as five large feathers on their hats. In the painting by Gainsborough the beautiful Mrs Graham is wearing a hat richly trimmed with feathers, and a pale blue silk dress, while in her hand she holds a single long ostrich feather as a fan.

Hyde Park was already the accepted rendezvous of beauty and fashion, the natural platform on which to display new finery. Rotten Row was crowded with elegant carriages and magnificent horses, and one can understand Rodenberg's enthusiasm, in his *Alltagsleben in London*, for the English horsewoman, who has always known how to sit a horse perfectly, and who went riding for the pleasure of riding, and not merely out of coquetry :

Hurrah for England's Amazons ! The ride is beginning. . . . As far as the eye can see, far beyond Kensington, where the perspective of the road loses itself in feathery birches, nothing but foaming, prancing horses, shaking and tossing their heads, and the blue-eyed, fair-haired maidens of old England upon them . . . you should see England's maidens on horseback ! How charming to kiss a hand that can curb a horse like that. . . . What a merry thronging, trampling and snorting and laughing all around me ! . . . dangerous women, those pretty horse-breakers.

Parallel with Rotten Row is a road for carriages, and here, at the end of the eighteenth century, stood idlers and dandies of the George Brummell pattern, leaning on the iron railings and quizzing through their spyglasses the beautiful occupants of the carriages, as the long gallery of beauty was unfolded before their eyes.

In the eighteenth century, however, the accepted fashionable promenade was in Kensington Gardens, which adjoin Hyde Park on the west. Here strolled and chatted the *beaux* and *belles* of high society. Here women displayed their *toilettes* and their beauty, flirted with the men, and showed off their fine

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carriages. At times there were as many as a thousand on the long drive from Kensington to Hyde Park Corner, the ladies sitting behind the clear plate-glass windows like so many lovely pictures framed and glazed. Many of them drove their own phaetons with white reins, and vividly impressed foreigners by their dash and skill. Schütz, in his *Briefen über London*, written at the end of the eighteenth century, declares that it was an unforgettable moment when he first saw an English carriage containing two women, the one with a whip in her hand and the other gracefully guiding the spirited English thoroughbreds. Even then English ladies often rode astride, which Archenholtz describes as "a remarkable custom."

This driving and promenading in the London parks lasted only for a short summer season—from May to August. Autumn, winter, and the early spring were usually passed in the country, in fashionable spas, or in Paris. After Tunbridge the favourite English spa was Bath, which, in the middle of the eighteenth century, rose to the height of its fame and popularity. It was resorted to by the fashionable world less for the sake of the waters than for the opportunities it offered for gambling and elegant flirtation. Doran, in his book *A Lady of the Last Century*, describes the life at Bath very vividly. Every one, male and female, walked about in the water clad in the most fantastic bathing dresses. They walked and did not swim, and only their heads were seen, for, in spite of a considerable freedom of manners in other respects, it would have shocked English susceptibilities to show anything more than the head and neck; the water had to reach to the throat, so that it looked as though the heads of the bathers were swimming about detached from their bodies. This prudishness, however, was compensated for by all kinds of frolics, for the bathers kissed, and pinched, and tweaked each other under cover of the water.

There was nothing Spartan or primitive in the habits of

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those who bathed or took the waters at Bath. Enamelled bowls, filled with perfumes or sweetmeats, floated before the elegant English ladies, and when one floated rather too far from its owner it provided a good opportunity for the cavalier who was flirting with her to fetch the bowl back, in the hope of gaining the reward of a tender glance or a kiss. Sometimes these bowls of confectionery formed an opportunity for making new acquaintances in the water, like the water-balls and rubber animals with which people amuse themselves at the seaside nowadays. The people playing in the water were watched by a large crowd of elegant onlookers. Every jest, every merry prank, was applauded in the liveliest way, and the company enjoyed itself thus until darkness began to fall. Then the baths were closed, and the ladies were carried in chairs, all wet as they were, to their country houses or hotels.

Many of the fashionable English spas were really nothing but meeting-places for lovers, where the only object of the women was to amuse themselves for a few weeks with their lovers or to find new ones when they had tired of the old. But the light-hearted Rococo spirit was not confined to watering-places: it was sufficiently manifest in London. Indeed, the same personalities ruled everywhere, and those speculative ladies, whose elegant houses in London were always able to offer new attractions to the English *beaux*, owned in Bath, Tunbridge, and other fashionable resorts their own places of entertainment, furnished with every kind of sybaritic luxury, and with a bevy of beautiful girls to attract custom.

London, particularly at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, enjoyed its night life at the fashionable 'routs'—evening parties in private houses where gambling and love-making were the chief attractions. At these routs gallant adventures were initiated and a general air of gallantry prevailed. Sometimes famous courtesans and ladies from the theatrical world were invited, partly to amuse the company by their singing or acting, partly to make the

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party more attractive by their beauty, but chiefly as a bait for the dandies and rakes, who might otherwise have preferred to spend their evenings in public places of pleasure.

The routs were notorious for unrestrained gambling. They never began before midnight. I. C. Hüttner, in his *Sittengemälde von London*, writes as follows about this type of English evening entertainment :

A crowd of people announced one after another in a loud voice by the servants, who are standing on the stairs and at the entrances to take the cards of invitation, swarm round the rooms and seat themselves at one or other of the numerous card tables, while the lady of the house flits from one room to another to welcome her guests and to show herself to all. . . . Let us cast a glance at the rows of crowded card tables standing here. Complete equality reigns at these altars of folly. Age, rank, character, and sex make not the slightest difference. Old wrinkled ladies are here the rivals of blooming girls. The cards make all equal. Whist, casino, faro, *rouge et noir*, and so on, blind the eyes of the men to the half-naked Graces swarming about them, and render the most talkative woman dumb as a statue. The loveliest faces, which shortly before were the thrones of every charm, are transformed into the physiognomies of furies. . . . Wild passions change angelic creatures into devils, in whose countenances malignity, deceit, fear, despair, wild frivolity, and grinning greed seem to be fighting for supremacy. . . . Toward break of day the rooms become empty again, and the company hurries home, one with a heart leaping for joy, another with thoughts of poison, dagger, rope, or pistol.

But they were a brilliant sight, these English routs ! The Englishwoman, who is at her best in the evening, understands how to wear a *décolleté* gown with the utmost art and discretion. And although in England in the eighteenth century much less paint was used than in the Latin countries, yet English women knew the art of adding colour to their natural complexions by the use of the rarest Chinese rouges, delicately applied, so that it was impossible, among women of fashion at least, to detect the artifice. Only the courtesans put on their rouge without

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taking the trouble to make it seem natural. Make-up among English women in polite circles became a real art in the eighteenth century, and enhanced their beauty, which could not always be said of French women at the period of the Pompadour. English cosmetics were more discreetly applied and were carefully prepared. Hüttner says that the toilet-table of a lady of fashion was a complete chemical laboratory, and that English women were particularly skilled in imitating the natural colour of the cheeks. For this purpose they used discreet cosmetics, such as 'Dutch pink' and 'Bavarian red water,' and their perfumes and soaps were as famous as their face-waters. In England, of course, as in other countries, 'patches' were the fashion. The English cosmetic industry advertised its products with blatant effrontery, and claimed that their use would give a woman of fifty the youthful freshness of a girl of twenty.

Already in the eighteenth century English women paid particular attention to the care of their hands. Well-cared-for and perfumed hands and well-formed toe- and finger-nails were considered then, as to-day, one of the greatest charms in a beautiful woman. Perfumed gloves, which were used in England as early as the sixteenth century, formed one of the chief requisites of a woman of the world two hundred years later. Gloves were worn at night also, in order to preserve the whiteness and delicacy of the skin. The nails were treated with a delicacy that puts even modern manicurists in the shade. Several hours each day were spent on the proper care of the hands, and there were specialists who made their living by it. In the year 1757, says Archenholtz, there lived a man in London who discovered a special method

of cutting finger-nails so that they were well shaped and increased the charm of beautiful hands, which are such an attractive item of feminine beauty. English women were not indifferent to this opportunity. The man was kept busy all day long, lived in a large house, and kept his carriage. He carried on this profession

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for two years, and made a fortune, which did not, however, prevent him from leaving London over £3000 in debt.

The universal use of the fan provided an excellent opportunity for the display of a well-manicured hand. The eighteenth century in England was the Golden Age of the fan. Fine ladies acquired so much skill in its manipulation that they could use it to express any mood, and could make it talk, as it were, a language of its own. The cult of the fan was so highly developed that a special fan was required for walking out, for the morning, for dining in the evening, and for state occasions. Fans were usually painted, and their handles were sometimes set with diamonds and other precious stones. Very often the pictures with which they were painted were extremely piquant, so that many a woman had more reason to blush for her fan than behind it.

The fashion for powdered hair lasted among English women for almost the entire course of the eighteenth century, and in no other country was so much spent on hair- and face-powder. Pitt saw in this fashion a ready means of acquiring revenue, and put a tax on powder, which led to its speedy abandonment. Yet, so deep-rooted was the custom that, according to a jest of the period, extravagant women used to powder the coats of their dogs and horses—these animals not having been included in the wording of the bill. It is possible, however, that a sense of hygiene, which is a marked characteristic of English women, was chiefly responsible for the abandoning of powdered hair. Certainly it offended their liking for cleanliness to go for weeks without undoing the high, powdered *coiffures*, and they knew, further, that the hair itself, one of an Englishwoman's greatest beauties, suffers greatly from uncleanness. Archenholtz says :

Many of them, even when most elegantly gowned, do not powder the hair. Cleanliness, which in this country [*i.e.*, in England] is cultivated to a high degree, enhances in no small degree the natural charms of the fair sex.



THE MILLINERS
Mezzotint. English. 1781

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None the less, many English women, like the women of other countries during the eighteenth century, dyed their hair or wore wigs. These wigs were made in all shades: black, grey, red, or brown; and their price ranged up to five guineas or even more. Most ladies, however, preferred to wear their own hair, and were particularly skilled at giving their *coiffures* a personal note. The painters of eighteenth-century Englishwomen have shown us these becoming *coiffures*, thick with natural curls, in innumerable charming pictures.

Even in the reign of the third George Englishwomen were more cleanly in their persons and habits than their Continental sisters. The meticulous care of the body and a daily bath, as well as the frequent changing of underwear, were considered, as they should be, a fundamental part of elegance for every woman. The Frenchwoman of the Rococo period avoided touching her skin with soap and water as much as possible, but Englishwomen at the end of the eighteenth century were already acquainted with Turkish, or vapour, baths and massage. Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau remarks:

Not far from Brighton an Indian has established Oriental baths, where one can be massaged as in Turkey, an exercise which is supposed to be very strengthening and healthy, and is very much favoured in the elegant world, particularly by women. This establishment is called "Mahomet's Baths." I found, however, that the interior was fitted up in a very European manner. The treatment resembles that of Russian vapour baths; but the rooms are not so well arranged as in Russia, for you sit in a cool compartment on a raised seat surrounded by a kind of palanquin of flannel, and into this small space rises from the ground beneath a hot medicated vapour. The flannel envelope has several sleeves which hang down outside, and into these the *masseur* inserts his arms and softly kneads the body of the bather. He then works several times with a firm and insistent pressure of the thumb over the limbs, the spine, the ribs and the stomach, which seems to be very beneficial to the constitution. You perspire for as long and as freely as you wish, and finally the top of the flannel tent is removed and you are douched with lukewarm water.

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English women were particularly noted—as they are to-day—for their appreciation of the amenities of the country. The great rural houses had no need of the billowing cushions and the close atmosphere of a voluptuous boudoir. Their beauty lay in their lofty halls and long galleries, in the rooms decorated with frescoes and paintings, and in the faultlessly kept parks with their wide lawns and browsing deer. Tall slender figures move about here in the open air, and have no time to be bored, for sport is already common in England even in the eighteenth century, and the dispensing of a boundless hospitality helps to pass the time in agreeable fashion. The English duchess is of a different stamp from the trifling, flirting French marquise. She is not afraid of air and sunlight, and finds in the country her natural and most becoming background, her court, her home. The finest palaces and country seats of the English nobility were, to a large extent, built in the eighteenth century, and their real splendour, their tasteful furniture, the libraries and the picture galleries which they contained, put many of the palaces of the reigning emperors and kings of Europe in the shade. “The halls of Ossian are here transformed into modern reception-rooms,” says Alexander Jung.

The fire still blazes in the hearth as it used to, but now the flames illumine beautiful frescoes, choice carpets, and human elegance; informal good cheer inspires and loosens the tongue, and when the charming ladies of old England rise from table and retire, and the wine is brought, the men still draw together in the old accustomed way, inviting the spirits of their ancestors to join in their revelry.

The ladies retired early; for, even to-day in old-fashioned houses, the English lady must not admit that she likes a glass of wine. If she wished to enjoy the respect of her friends she might only sip the wine or drink a little mixed with water. It gave great offence, therefore, to her contemporaries that Lady Hamilton should drink wine without embarrassment when

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dining in public or in the presence of men. Had she, as many other English ladies, taken it secretly and unobserved in her own room, nobody would have been shocked, but she was a child of the people, to whom hypocrisy and dissimulation were alien, and she cared little what people thought of her. Her whole life was guided by her impulses, even when she was the wife of Sir William Hamilton.

The English nobility, however, adhered strictly to tradition, often even to the stiff ceremonial of the peerage in the seventeenth century. In his *England im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* Max von Boehn observes :

When Lady Elizabeth Howard pays a call her coach is escorted on either side by bareheaded lackeys . . . her daughter-in-law, the Duchess of Somerset, never dared to be seated in her presence, except when she was invited to do so. . . . Catherine Sedley, Duchess of Buckingham, an illegitimate daughter of King James II, never visited the opera except in her state robes and a red velvet cloak, trimmed with ermine, and when she was lying on her death-bed she made the ladies who attended her swear that they would not sit down when she lost consciousness, but would wait until she was actually dead.

Monetary extravagance too was a tradition with the English aristocrats. Horace Walpole said of the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle : " Their houses, their gardens, their table, their carriages . . . devoured immense sums, and the extent of the Duke's debts surpassed even the money he squandered." The same applies to Lord Albemarle, who died in Paris in 1755 ; in spite of his wife's dowry of £25,000 and a yearly income of £14,000, he left behind him debts amounting to £9000. Gambling debts and losses of all kinds were often liquidated by means of a rich marriage. Lady Sarah Cadogan, for instance, was married by her father to the son of the Duke of Richmond, when he was scarcely more than a boy.

The story is a most romantic one. Charles Lennox, first Duke of Richmond (of the fourth creation) and natural son

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of Charles II by Louise de Keroualle, lost immense sums one evening to the Earl of Cadogan, who agreed to forgive the debt if a marriage could be arranged between his daughter Sarah and the young Earl of March, the Duke of Richmond's heir. The girl was fetched from the nursery and the boy from the schoolroom, and the marriage was duly performed in spite of the protests of the young people. Immediately afterward the bridegroom left with his tutor for a tour of the Continent, and did not return to England for several years. His memories of his wife were anything but pleasing, and he refused even to see her. Instead, he went on the night of his arrival to the theatre and there saw, in a box, a lady of enchanting loveliness surrounded by a host of admirers. Determined to make her acquaintance, he asked the lady's name, and was told that she was "the reigning toast, the beautiful Lady March." In such romantic fashion did the two meet again. The young Earl hurried round to her box and claimed his wife. It is pleasant to learn that they were very happy together. Horace Walpole saw them together in 1741 at a ball given by Sir Thomas Robinson of Rokeby, where "the two beauties were his daughters—Lady Caroline and Lady Emily Lennox," and records that "the duke sat by his wife all night kissing her hand."

Masked balls had an irresistible attraction for English Society in the eighteenth century, just as they had for the French. Indeed, it can be said that at this period they were at the pinnacle of their popularity all over the civilized world. The perpetual novelty of appearing in a thousand different parts and costumes had an irresistible attraction, especially for women, and some of the costumes chosen would not have been out of place on the stage of a modern French music-hall. The charming and extravagant Miss Chudleigh chose her costumes mainly from Greek mythology. Anticipating Mme Tallien, she appeared on one occasion as Iphigenia at the altar, "but so naked," says Lady Elizabeth Montague, a trifle

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tartly, "that the high priest could very easily inspect the entrails of the victim." Horace Walpole declared "that you would have taken her for Andromeda."

The career of Elizabeth Chudleigh kept London's gossip-mongers in a perpetual flutter of excitement. She was born in 1720 of a good family, but her father, Colonel Chudleigh, dying when she was but six years old, she and her mother were left very poorly provided for. Through the interest of William Pulteney (afterward Earl of Bath) she was appointed Maid of Honour to Augusta, Princess of Wales. James, sixth Duke of Hamilton, then a boy of nineteen, fell in love with her, but his letters were intercepted by Miss Chudleigh's aunt, and she consented to a secret marriage with the Honourable Augustus Hervey, later Earl of Bristol, a young lieutenant in the Navy, whom she had met at Winchester races. This was the beginning of misfortune. Her child by Hervey died, the couple soon separated, and as the secret of the marriage had been well kept, 'Miss Chudleigh' still retained her post at the Court of the Princess. The Princess certainly allowed her a considerable licence of conduct, and may even have been in her confidence.

As Augustus Hervey now seemed likely to succeed to the title, his wife began to collect proofs of her marriage to him, but at the same time became the mistress of Evelyn Pierrepont, second Duke of Kingston. This scandal, which was well known, did not prevent her from giving a splendid ball in honour of the Prince of Wales, a ball attended by the cream of English nobility and by foreign ambassadors. In 1765 she travelled abroad, and astonished Frederick the Great by emptying two bottles of wine as she danced, staggering, on the ballroom floor.

On her return to England she plunged into a life of complete dissipation, and in 1769 bigamously married the Duke of Kingston. For this she was tried and found guilty, and would have been burned in the hand had she not pleaded the

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privilege of her peerage. She was, however, left in possession of her fortune, and spent the rest of her life wandering about Europe. She even visited the Empress Catherine of Russia, and was well received in most Continental capitals. She died suddenly in Paris at the age of sixty-eight, wild and restless to the last.

Some of the balls, even those organized by members of the aristocracy, were conducted almost entirely for profit, and vied in popularity, among those who could afford them, with the attractions of Ranelagh, Vauxhall, the Pantheon, and Almack's. Tickets, engraved by the best artists, were subscribed for months in advance, and the organizers frequently cleared large sums. The custom of subscription dances arose no doubt originally from the rising demand for expensive entertainments, which it was difficult for a single purse to supply; but the balls soon became commercialized, and some of their promoters were simply international adventurers.

Chief among these was the famous Mme Cornelys, whose life almost deserves a chapter to itself. She was born in Venice in 1723, the daughter of an actor named Imer. The beautiful city was entering upon its last phase, its final orgy of luxury and extravagance, and it is hardly surprising that the daughter of an actor should desert the paths of virtue at an early age. At seventeen the future Theresa Cornelys became the mistress of the Senator Malipiero. Her early history is a little obscure. She was married to a dancer named Pompeati, and sang in one of Gluck's operas at the Haymarket in 1746. For a time she was the mistress of the Margrave of Baireuth, and in 1753 was back in Venice, where she met Casanova. She had an undoubted genius for organizing entertainments of all kinds, and was once in charge of all the theatres in the Austrian Netherlands. She came to England for good in 1759, and was advertised as a singer. In 1760, however, Mrs Cornelys (as she now called herself) purchased Carlisle House, in Soho Square, and opened it for subscription balls. These were enormously

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successful for a time, and the happy promotress had to enlarge her premises. The height of her prosperity was at the end of the 1760's, when half the nobility and some members of the royal family visited her rooms, and when Bach and Abel were conducting her concerts. However, the competition of Almack's, the opening of the Pantheon, and a judgment brought against her for infringing the privileges of the Italian Opera House united to cause her bankruptcy in November 1772. She kept a hotel at Southampton for a time, but always hoped to renew her activities in London. She was employed in 1775 to organize a *fête* at Ranelagh, and in the following year actually regained possession of Carlisle House. But it was not for long. Under the name of Mrs Smith she sunk into increasing obscurity and poverty, and before her death sold asses' milk at Knightsbridge. She died in the Fleet Prison in 1797, at the age of seventy-four.

Horace Walpole wrote of her :

She has been the Heidegger of the age, and presided over our diversions . . . she drew in both righteous and ungodly . . . and made her house a fairy palace for balls, concerts, and masquerades.

According to Archenholtz :

One saw there illuminated pillars and triumphal arches, halls transformed into gardens, labyrinthine flower-beds, orangeries and fountains, transparent pictures and inscriptions, stairs and passages decorated with coloured lamps in pyramidal and other forms and with festoons of flowers, refreshment tables arranged in an amphitheatre, which produced an effect as strange as it was beautiful.

Many of the rooms with their princely furniture were arranged to suit the styles of the costumes which were worn at different masquerades; one might be Indian, another Chinese, a third Persian, and yet another Turkish. Every year a commemoration festival was held in Mme Cornelys's house, at which 9000 wax candles burned in rich candelabra, shedding

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on the assembly a brilliance of illumination almost unknown in that ill-lighted century. Part of the profits came from the gaming tables, particularly from those at which faro was played. Faro was a rage in the second half of the eighteenth century, even among ladies.

Among the public places of amusement visited by the elegant world, such as Vauxhall, the Pantheon, Marylebone Gardens, and Ranelagh, the last named was without doubt the most famous and most fashionable, and it retained its attractiveness from 1742 right through the eighteenth century, and even later. It was frequented both by good society and by the *bourgeoisie*. Princes and princesses, clerks and shop-girls, famous courtesans and common harlots, were to be found there. It was here they met to put off sorrow and find joy, to put off husbands and find lovers. It was the universal temple of pleasure.

Horace Walpole was there soon after it opened, and wrote to Sir Horace Mann (April 22, 1742) to relate his impressions:

I have been breakfasting this morning at Ranelagh Gardens: they have built an immense amphitheatre, with balconies full of little ale-houses; it is in rivalry to Vauxhall, and costs above twelve thousand pounds. The building is not finished, but they get great sums by people going to see it and breakfasting in the house: there were yesterday no less than three hundred and eighty persons, at eighteenpence apiece. You see how poor we are, when, with a tax of four shillings in the pound, we are laying out such sums for cakes and ale.

The gulf between woman of fashion and *demi-mondaine* was bridged in England by a class of women who may perhaps be compared to the demi-castors of the Second Empire. They were called 'demi-reps,' an abbreviation of 'demi-reputations.' They were women who, without belonging to the category of confessed courtesans, were too careless of their reputation to be included in respectable society. Among



MRS SIDDONS AS THE TRAGIC MUSE
Portion of oil-painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds

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them were world-famed beauties. As a rule they were married and belonged to the solid *bourgeoisie*, occasionally to the aristocracy. Their great desire for luxury, their spendthrift and pleasure-seeking characters, as well as their passions, caused them to take one or more lovers, partly for love and partly because their husbands alone could never have defrayed the expense of their establishments. They were very little behind the Frenchwomen of the eighteenth century in elegance and refinement, and their love of pleasure knew no bounds. Adultery and a contempt for the marriage tie were just as prevalent at that time in English Society as in the France of Louis XV, and the atmosphere of frivolity was as much the work of the demi-reps as of the real prostitutes. As in France, actresses in England, particularly the dancers at Covent Garden, were nearly all for sale. The stage and the brothel were never far apart. Many of them made brilliant matches, for in England the rigid Continental class-divisions were unknown. A duke could take as his wife any girl he liked, from the people or from the streets, and Society treated the new duchess just as though she were sprung from the highest circles of the aristocracy. Examples of these marriages, which the Germans and the French would stigmatize as *mésalliances*, are innumerable in English Society of the eighteenth century. Thus a Duke of Shrewsbury married his old mistress, a well-known Italian *demi-mondaine*. The charming Miss Fenton, who appeared in the *Beggar's Opera* as Polly, was the mistress of the Duke of Bolton, and bore him several children, although the union was ultimately sealed by official marriage. Many other members of the nobility selected their wives from the lower strata of the people. The illegitimate daughter of a Newmarket jockey became the wife of the Duke of Ancaster, and was one of the most elegant, if most notorious, women of the century. Marriages between actresses or dancers and lords were commonplaces, and caused little remark; and it was not only famous actresses, and those who had already

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made names for themselves on the stage, who were raised to such high rank, but often mere beginners, as, for example, the two beautiful sisters Elizabeth and Maria Gunning. Both were extraordinarily attractive, but their family was in reduced circumstances, and they came from Dublin to London and went on the stage. One of them, Elizabeth Gunning, immediately attracted the attention of the sixth Duke of Hamilton, and was secretly married to him at midnight in Mayfair Chapel in 1752. In 1759 she married John Campbell, afterward Duke of Argyll. She became Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, and in 1776 was created Baroness Hamilton. She was thus twice a duchess, and a peeress in her own right. Her sister Maria married the sixth Earl of Coventry in the same year as Elizabeth became Duchess of Hamilton. Unfortunately she died at the age of twenty-eight, of consumption, her death being hastened, it is thought, by the use of cosmetics charged with white lead.

Some of these matrimonial alliances were extremely romantic—as if the Prince and Cinderella had stepped out of the fairy-tale to play their parts in real life. Young Henry Cecil, Earl of Exeter, saw in the country a pretty peasant-girl, Sarah Hoggins, working, like any other servant, barefoot in the fields. He fell in love with her, married her, and lived with her as a simple commoner without telling her anything of his rank or of his great riches. In 1793, when he became heir to his uncle, he took the unsuspecting girl with him to his wonderful estate at Burleigh, and only then told her that she was the Countess of Exeter and absolute mistress over all these riches. This is the origin of Tennyson's poem *The Lord of Burleigh*:

And, while now she wonders blindly,
Nor the meaning can divine,
Proudly turns he round and kindly,
"All of this is mine and thine."
Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,

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Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he.

And a gentle consort made he,
And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady,
And the people loved her much.
But a trouble weigh'd upon her,
And perplex'd her, night and morn,
With the burthen of an honour
Unto which she was not born.
Faint she grew, and ever fainter,
And she murmur'd, "Oh, that he
Were once more that landscape-painter,
Which did win my heart from me!"
So she droop'd and droop'd before him,
Fading slowly from his side :
Three fair children first she bore him,
Then before her time she died.

It was quite possible during the eighteenth century in England to live a life of gallantry and yet enjoy the intercourse, if not the respect, of society. The well-known actress George Anne Bellamy, who played Juliet to Garrick's Romeo, had innumerable acquaintances among the aristocracy. The German historian Archenholtz calls her "more of a Maintenon than an Aspasia," and although the phrase sounds oddly in English ears, George Anne Bellamy certainly lived for a considerable time as a woman of fashion. She was the illegitimate daughter of Lord Tyrawley, the British Ambassador at Lisbon, and he introduced her to Lord Chesterfield and to Pope when she was still quite a girl. Becoming estranged from her father, she went on the stage. The dissolute Lord Byron abducted her, and she drifted into a career of gallantry, which did not, however, retard her success in the theatre. Henry Fox relieved her on one occasion from her chronic pecuniary embarrassment, and she became the mistress (it was thought—perhaps even by herself—that she was his wife) of Fox's illegitimate son Calcraft, the wealthy army contractor. It was while presiding at Calcraft's table that her social gifts were most plainly

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manifest. She was small and fair, with blue eyes and attractive features, and the charm of her conversation was acknowledged even by censorious judges. As her position was supposed to have been regularized, she was received even by ladies of the aristocracy, but a quarrel with Calcraft led to her separating from him, and she devoted a large portion of her memoirs to blackening his character. She fell into destitution, contracted a bigamous marriage with West Digges, the actor, and was later supported by the famous harlequin Woodward. The *Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy* appeared in 1785. It is a somewhat tiresome work in five volumes, and is almost entirely concerned with her money troubles. She seems to have grown weak-minded toward the end of her life, and it is thought that the *Apology* was actually written by Alexander Bicknell from her verbal reminiscences. A performance was arranged for her benefit at Drury Lane soon after the publication of her memoirs, and her last years (for she died in 1788) were probably fairly comfortable. She was extravagant and luxurious to an extraordinary degree. At the height of her popularity enormous sums passed through her hands, but she dissipated every penny until, at last, she had to rely on the charity of her friends. Such of her letters as have been preserved are almost all applications for money.

The life of Mrs Siddons was in complete contrast to that of George Anne Bellamy. She was never extravagant; indeed, she was often accused of meanness, but meanness, if she was guilty of it, was almost her only fault. She is the crowning example of an eighteenth-century actress who owed nothing in her advance to fame to the favour of any lover. She was conspicuously virtuous throughout her long life. Early in her career she married the obscure actor whose name she was to make so illustrious, and bore him a large family, which she tended with all the devotion of a mother. One must admit, however, that Mrs Siddons was an exception, and she was, perhaps, fortunate in her epoch. Had she been born earlier

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in the century she might not have found the path of virtue so easy. Born some thirteen years after George Anne Bellamy's *début* on the London stage, she died in 1831, full of honours, but perhaps more respected than loved.

CHAPTER VIII

EMMA, LADY HAMILTON

THE fabulous rise of a poor girl such as Emma Lyon, later Lady Hamilton, from the lowest ranks of the people to the friendship of the nobility, was not so incredible and rare an occurrence as it might appear to one who had no knowledge of England in the eighteenth century. There are women, too, who are, as it were, virtuosos of life, who are givers and recipients of pleasure and happiness, who are rich in the wealth of their personalities, their talents, and their physical charms. They sink into the whirlpool of vice, without allowing their inner being to be tainted. They sell their bodies maybe, but not their souls. With amiable frivolity they override all the laws of *bourgeois* morality; their lives are one long succession of scandals, of public and secret love affairs, and they rise and sink with the status of their lovers. They are artists of life in the true sense of the words. Their skill, their instincts, their adaptability to every rank of life, to every kind of circumstance, and the power of their extraordinary beauty open all doors to them. Society accepts or overlooks in their lives circumstances which in others would be sharply criticized and bitterly despised. Such women cannot be judged by the moral standards of *bourgeois* respectability. They remain what they are—attractive and charming butterflies.

Among many such women Emma, Lady Hamilton, holds a high place, possessed of greater amiability and more striking talents than most of her kind. In spite of the fact that her rise was made easy by the customs of a comparatively tolerant society, she was one of the most remarkable figures of her

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period. Her life consisted of a chain of gallant adventures. Her beauty and talents became objects of universal admiration. Happiness, honour, riches, and a respected position in the world were hers, until, in her old age, she fell into poverty. The daughter of poor parents, she made the early acquaintance of want and sorrow. She had to make her own way in the world; first as a children's nurse, then as a barmaid in a sailors' saloon, as a 'hostess' in notorious pleasure resorts, and as a model to artists. Some of these owed their fame, at least in part, to her beauty, and to their pictures she contributed not only her enchanting face and the slender lines of her body, but her remarkable histrionic gift also. She could represent anything that the painter desired—a Bacchanalian, a Calypso, a Circe, a Cassandra, a Magdalen, a St Cecilia, a Pythia, or a simple girl at the spinning wheel. Every emotion found its appropriate expression in her features. Joy, wantonness, wildness, pain and suffering, sensibility, *naïveté*, viciousness, cold pride, and passionate surrender—all these she could express, ready for the artist to set down on canvas. Romney's biographer says:

Nature endowed the beautiful Emma with an amazing talent for the two sister arts, music and painting. In music she attained great perfection and skill. For painting she showed such a refined taste and such power of expression that she provided an inspiring model for artists in every range of character. Like the language of Shakespeare, her features were capable of rendering every feeling, every degree of passion with enchanting truth. Romney was delighted when he saw the wonderful power of control she possessed over her expressive features . . . and the strength and variety in the expression of her emotions perpetually enlivened and ennobled the artist's work.

She was born early in the reign of the third George. The exact date is uncertain, but she was not baptized until May 1765. Her parents lived at Great Neston, in Cheshire, and were very poor, and her father died soon after her birth, leaving his family to struggle along as best they might. In her

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childhood Emma¹ Lyon often stayed with her grandmother at Hawarden, in cottages, some of which still remain, and at a very early age went out to service there as a nursemaid.

Her first mistress, Mrs Thomas, a doctor's wife, had great trouble in training her to be domesticated and orderly. The girl, who was then thirteen years old, was, however, willing and easily guided, and Mrs Thomas looked after her with motherly care. Lady Hamilton, at the zenith of her fortune, was not ashamed to pay frequent visits to this lady whose children she had tended when she was little more than a child herself.

In 1779 or at the beginning of 1780, when she was about fifteen (some authorities say seventeen), she came with her mother to London, and obtained employment in the family of another doctor, Dr Budd, of Chatham Place, near St James's Market. Her fellow-servant there was Jane Powell, afterward famous as an actress, and Walter Sichel, Lady Hamilton's biographer, remarks very justly that "it is assuredly not among the least of the many marvels attending Emma's progress that an eminent surgeon should have harboured two such *belles* in his area."

The doctor, however, did not remain her employer for long, for she took a place in the household of the composer Linley. Mrs Linley was a shareholder in Drury Lane Theatre, and had a private box there. Emma, or Emily, as she now called herself, had to accompany her to the performances, and often to take messages from her not always good-tempered mistress to the actors and actresses behind the scenes. The strange life of the stage made a deep impression on the little girl, who already in herself possessed all the gifts of a great histrionic talent. While in this theatrical family Emma for the first time, secretly in her room, practised the 'attitudes,' or, as we should now say, the living pictures, which later made her so famous.

¹ A name each of whose several variations was used by Lady Hamilton at some part of her life.—TRANSLATOR.

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Her delightful figure began to develop to even greater beauty. "She already displayed in her bearing and in her whole personality," writes one of her contemporaries, "that boldness and assurance which remained her most striking characteristic," and many a family of the aristocracy would have been glad to have so charming a child as a daughter. She possessed such delicate features, such a distinguished appearance, that she could easily rival the most aristocratic young girls of the English nobility. Even as a little girl, when as a children's maid she walked out with her little charges, she attracted attention. Pedestrians stood still and gazed after her until she was out of sight, and the London beggars blessed her for her sylph-like beauty with the words, "God bless you, my lovely child."

The exact truth about this period of her life will probably never be known, for all the stories circulated by Lady Hamilton's enemies in later life are marked by obvious exaggeration. She left her situation with the Linleys quite suddenly—it is said because she was heart-broken by the death of young Linley, whom she loved—and engaged herself as barmaid to a fruit and wine merchant in St James's Market. This did not necessarily imply that she had ceased to be virtuous, and, in spite of the story that she was for a while 'on the streets,' we may be forgiven for preferring to believe the more romantic account of her first lapse. A cousin of Emma's from Flintshire (so the story goes) had been seized by the press gang during the struggle with America, and put on board a man-of-war. He left a wife and child in poverty. Emma's kind heart sought ways and means to free him from war service, and she found them. She herself hurried to the captain of the ship, the only man who could recommend the release of the sailor. He was John Willet-Payne, afterward Rear-Admiral Willet-Payne, a handsome man, still young. Emma's pleading melted his heart, but he could not resist the temptation of demanding the possession of the young girl

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in return for compliance with her request. Emma became his mistress, perhaps not merely from gratitude, but because she liked the handsome young naval officer. When, scarcely seventeen, she gave birth to their child, Captain Willet-Payne had long been at sea again. For a few months he provided her with means, but afterward bothered no more about her.

It may have been at this difficult period of her life that she fell in with the 'lady of fashion,' nicknamed the 'Abbess' (which in English slang means 'procuress'), who kept a house of rendezvous in Arlington Street. However, she did not stay there long, for she soon emerges into public notice in connexion with the "Temple of Health" of the notorious 'Dr' James Graham.

Graham was an extraordinary man, an extravagant mixture of humbug, actual insanity, and shrewd common sense. He professed to cure his patients by means of "ætherial and balsamic" medicines, milk baths, dry friction, and pseudo-electrical treatments. He advertised a "magnetic throne" as well as a "celestial bed" for the cure of sterility. He was more showman than doctor, and made his crowds of spectators pay half a crown apiece to witness his exhibition. It was in 1779 that he opened the Temple of Health, on the Royal Terrace, Adelphi, facing the Thames, where the chief attraction was a young woman representing the Goddess of Health. Graham, indeed, quite honestly and quite sensibly, believed that people wore too many clothes, but he was not above turning his belief to account by exhibiting to his patrons the most beautiful young girl he could find.

The Temple of Health had been fitted up regardless of expense. Over the porch stood the inscription "Templum Aesculapio Sacrum." There were three garishly decorated rooms with galleries above, and pictures of heroes and kings, including Alfred the Great. Crystal glass pillars enclosed the electrical apparatus for reviving youth and strength. The innermost chamber was the temple of Apollo, with its magnetic



LADY HAMILTON AS "THE AMBADDRESS"

*Colour-print by Appleton after G. Romney
About 1799*

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"celestial bed," with its gilt dragons, overarching pavilion, and inscription, "*Dolorifica res est si quis homo dives nullum habet domi suae successorem.*" "But on the right of the Temple," says one of Dr Graham's own advertisements, "is strikingly seen a beautiful figure of Fecundity holding a horn of plenty in her hand and surrounded by children." Stained-glass windows shed a religious light on these marvels, while in an anteroom could be heard "the melodious tones of flute, celestina, and harmonica, of pleasant voices and of an organ."

Walter Sichel suggests that Emma may first have been engaged by Graham as a singer in the mock oratorios and cantatas, composed by himself, with which he sought to attune the souls of the faithful, and that her beauty may have tempted him to exhibit her as an illustration of the truth of his doctrines.

Certainly Dr Graham's exhibition served to spread her fame, and many came to see who were certainly not yet in need of the "celestial bed." The 'Temple,' in fact, became a place of resort for the young bloods of the town, and one of these, Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh, carried her off with him to his country seat at Up Park, in Sussex.

Now opened quite a new life for the child of humble parents. Fetherstonhaugh kept open house with his hard-riding, hard-drinking friends. They and their mistresses rode all day and revelled all night, and Emma joined them in both pleasures. She who had never sat a horse before became an expert rider, and took her fences with a skill and daring which won the admiration of her lover. At table she was animated and sparkling, the centre of gaiety, the mistress of the whole boisterous establishment.

But after a very short while the wilfully unintellectual life of the English country squire began to pall on her. At Dr Graham's establishment she had already tasted the admiration of cultivated men, the conversation of artists. Even the

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gimcrack Temple of Health seemed a place of refinement compared with the merely sexual and sporting pleasures of Up Park. She looked round among her lover's guests for at least one man who had other thoughts than those connected with a horse, a bottle, or a woman, and by a strange chance she found him.

The Honourable Charles Francis Greville was the second son of the Earl of Warwick. He was a dilettante antiquarian and connoisseur, prudent and self-centred to a fault, and it is hard to imagine him among the roistering crew of Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh's friends. To Emma he seemed a being from a larger world. She fell in love with him, and he, in his cold way, with her. They became lovers, until Greville's visit was at an end. Then Sir Harry, finding that she was about to have a child by some other than himself, turned her out of doors without ceremony, and with only enough money to make her way home. In great distress she wrote to Greville from Cheshire :

What shall I dow? Good God what shall I dow. . . . I can't come to town for want of money. I have not a farthing to bless myself with, and I think my friends look coolly on me. I think so. O.G. what shall I dow? What shall I dow? O how your letter affected me when you wished me happiness. O.G. that I was in your posession or in Sir H. what a happy girl would I have been! Girl indeed! What else am I but a girl in distres—in reall distres? For God's sake, G. write the minet you get this, and only tell me what I am to dow. Direct some whay. I am allmos mad. O for God's sake tell me what is to become on me. O dear Grevell, write to me. Write to me. G. adue, and believe yours for ever Emly Hart.¹

In reply Greville wrote one of his careful, admonitory letters. He was far from being well off, and he hesitated to burden himself with so beautiful and temperamental a mistress. He decided, however, to set her up, and chose for the purpose a

¹ This surname she seems to have adopted at the beginning of her intimacy with Greville.—TRANSLATOR.

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small house in the then rural Edgware Row, near Paddington Church. As he knew Emma's great abilities and regarded them sympathetically, he not only saw to her physical welfare, but also helped her in the further development of her talents and the culture of her mind. He gave her music and dancing masters, instructed her in everything connected with a cultivated mode of life, read books with her, had her taught French and Italian—in short, made of her a lady, with whom, if he wished, he could have been seen in the best society. That she could not spell correctly was not exceptionable at that period. Ladies of the highest circles could write no better than she.

Emma lived for some years a very happy and idyllic life with Greville, although a very quiet one. He was her first real love—perhaps the only one of her life—for, later, Nelson loved her more than she him. Greville lifted her out of the mire, and saved her from the abyss which threatened to engulf her. He was the first man who treated her with respect. She loved him and was grateful to him for this. She was not only a very intelligent and teachable pupil, but also a delightful lover, an enchantress in every respect—a siren. She was the personification of voluptuous grace, and George Romney never tired of painting her in the house at Edgware Row. There was something tender and delicate, something infinitely womanly and kind in her. She is the prototype of English beauty; a true English girl of the people; open-minded, unsentimental, good-tempered, and extremely grateful toward her old and new friends—a sweetheart in the best sense of the word. Sir William Hamilton wrote of her later: "She is better than any other being that nature has created." The men who fell under her spell found it hard to free themselves from it, and, like Charles Greville, remained her friends even after they had parted from her. Even when she deceived them they remained devoted to her.

Possibly Greville would never have parted from so lovely

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and charming a mistress if he had not been forced to do so by the state of his finances. Emma loved him truly. For four years she ruled his home as its gracious and graceful mistress. Her charm when she presided at the tea-table was inimitable. Her friends called her "the pretty tea-maker." She was beautiful and elegant, temperamental, witty, intelligent and talented, coquettish and charming—in short, endowed with all the gifts which can enchant a man, and with it all she was not greedy for money. She always followed her impulses, and took life as it came. She was generous, but not extravagant. Her mode of life was always adapted to her circumstances: rich, lavish, and exigent if the man possessed the means; modest and simple if her lover had not much wealth. She was eternally grateful to the man who had lifted her out of the mire, but her rise in the world never made her proud. She always remembered her humble origin, and was not ashamed when she was the friend of a queen to admit whence she had sprung. When she had long been the wife of the English Ambassador at Naples she wrote from Nelson's ship, the *Foudroyant*, in the year 1799, to her old friend Greville:

My mother is at Palermo (with the Queen). You cannot imagine how she is loved and respected by everyone. She has a beautiful apartment in our house, always lives with us, has meals with us, and so on. Only if she does not wish it (at big dinners for instance) she suggests herself that she should not be present, and then she always has a friend with her. And "La Signora Madama dell' Ambasciatora" is well known all over Palermo, just as she was in Naples. In my absence, the Queen has been very friendly to her. She has visited her and told her she may be very proud of her famous daughter who has done so much in the last troublous months. I tell you this so that you may see that I am not unworthy to have once been your pupil. God bless you.

Greville, although the son of an earl and a Member of Parliament, was not a rich man. He could not keep a carriage for his Emma nor provide her with a place of her own, as his

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friends did for their mistresses. Neither could he buy her costly dresses or jewels, nor surround her with splendour and luxury. He only wanted to see her happy and to make of her a good and cultured woman, and she was well content to live quietly in Edgware Row. She was always dressed as a lady; some of her clothes came from the best dressmaker in London, Mrs Hackwood, but her dressmaker's bill could never, so long as she lived with Greville, exceed £20 a month. She had two servants, a housemaid and a parlour-maid, but no man-servant or coachman.

Emma's mother lived in Greville's house, and fulfilled a very important function there. Mrs Cadogan—like her daughter, she had changed her name several times—was an excellent cook, and she was also, it seems, an extremely tractable and good-natured person, for every one gives this mother the best of characters. She was always with her daughter, and rose step by step with her. Greville, as well as Sir William Hamilton and Lord Nelson, respected Mrs Cadogan, and treated her with as much regard as though she had been a lady in his own circle.

In the year 1786 a man came into Emma's life who was to give a decisive turn to her fate. Sir William Hamilton, English Ambassador at the Court of Naples, a man of the world, and still handsome at sixty, came on leave to London to attend to private business—possibly to look for a second wife—and during his stay he visited his nephew, Charles Greville. He saw the young man's lovely and accomplished mistress, "the pretty tea-maker," and was immediately captivated by her charms. And when he saw her dance and heard her sing he was completely bewitched. A connoisseur and collector of classical art treasures, he saw in the noble lines of her body a realization of the wonderful contours of Greek plastic art. He decided to take her back to Naples with him, on the pretext of still further developing her talents, but in reality in order to make this divine woman his mistress. Greville consented.

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He welcomed this plan as a means of parting from Emma without exposing her to an uncertain future, which, for one of her quick and impressionable character, would have been full of perils. He was no longer in a position himself to be financially responsible for her; and eventually everything was arranged to their mutual satisfaction. Sir William Hamilton undertook the charge of the beautiful girl, who soon after, in March 1786, accompanied by her mother and the painter Gavin Hamilton, left England and travelled through Germany to Naples. For a time Emma did not know what the bargain was between uncle and nephew. She still regarded the elderly gentleman merely as a patron. Innumerable letters to her former lover prove this. She still clung to Greville, and longed to return to him, until she realized that the English Ambassador had not acted entirely disinterestedly in taking her away with him, and that her lover too had agreed to the plan. She was disillusioned about the one, but filled with admiration for, and gratitude toward, the other, who surrounded her with every attention, and laid his heart, his riches, his house, and his worldly position at her feet.

A new life opened before her in Naples. Sir William Hamilton indulged her every whim, showered luxury and riches upon her. No country, no town, could have made a more fitting frame for Emma's beauty and rich gifts than Italy and Naples, then a capital city, and able to compete with all the larger towns of Europe in elegance. Sir William Hamilton was one of "those English epicures," as Dühren says,

who, since the middle of the eighteenth century, had repaired to sunny Italy, there in its pleasant climate, amid the most glorious artistic treasures, to enjoy, in the companionship of scholars and artists, the pleasures of life to the fullest degree.

In his house Emma learned to enjoy a most varied life of pleasure. Her own taste was refined by acquaintance with the famous Greek works of art which her friend and patron collected. She began to play a part in Neapolitan Society,



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particularly in the Society of the English colony in Naples. None failed to treat Sir William Hamilton's lovely and charming mistress as an equal, and the English people—usually so strict about such things—who came to Naples or were resident there eagerly sought Emma's acquaintance. The Duchess of Argyll, Lord and Lady Elcho, and many other members of the English nobility so opened their hearts to this girl of the people that they were soon the closest of friends.

Emma's intimate friendship with the beautiful and distinguished Duchess of Argyll and Lady Elcho was regarded with amazement in English Society. It is said, however, that these English friends had persuaded themselves that Emma had long been Hamilton's wife in secret, and in this way they either calmed their moral scruples or considered that appearances were sufficiently preserved. For, as has been said, an English lord might, in the eighteenth century, marry a prostitute without offending Society, but Society could not visit the house of a woman who was his mistress. The foreign guests who visited the house of the Ambassador came to the same conclusion regarding the relationship between Sir William and Emily Hart, and Hamilton never denied the rumours about his secret marriage to Emma, although he did not actually marry her until she had been his mistress for five years.

It was not merely Neapolitan Society and the English aristocrats who visited Naples who were captivated by the charming young girl who was Sir William Hamilton's mistress. Commanders of foreign ships lying at anchor in Naples harbour invited her on board with the Ambassador, and arranged *fêtes* and balls in honour of the young beauty. The naval officers were her most ardent admirers. When the Commodore of the Dutch fleet lay outside Naples in the year 1787 he arranged a banquet to which he invited not only Sir William Hamilton and his friend, but also Emma's mother, Mrs Cadogan. The Commodore, the captain, and four other officers received their guests on shore, as though they had been royalty, and escorted

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them in their long-boats to the ship on which the banquet had been prepared for them.

On such occasions Emma always wore her favourite costume: a white muslin dress with a wide blue silk sash. Her golden-brown hair was loose, and hung in long ringlets almost to her feet. As she stepped into the long-boat she was greeted with a salute from twenty guns, and while the boat slowly approached the ship, the frigates of the Dutch fleet fired all their guns, and the whole of Naples heard the salutes which were fired in honour of a young girl who had risen from the lowest ranks of the people. The table on board the Commodore's ship was laid for thirty persons, and Emily Hart had the place of honour. The dinner was brilliant. In the evening a visit to the opera was arranged, and Emma and Sir William Hamilton were seated quite near to the royal box. The lovely mistress of the English Ambassador planned to be particularly elegant on this night, as she knew that the whole Court would be present and would watch her with curious eyes, for she was not yet officially recognized by Court circles. She had had made a new red satin gown, a white satin wrap embroidered all over with gold tinsel, and a charming white feather toque newly sent from Paris. After the dinner on board she wished to return to the Embassy, in order to dress for the occasion, and her disappointment was great when Sir William Hamilton could not be induced to part from his pleasant Dutch hosts, but drank with them bottle after bottle to the health of "the most enchanting woman in the world." When at last they did leave the Commodore's ship it was too late to dress for the opera. Just as she was, in her white summer dress, with its soft folds, and her blue hat, and her hair hanging down her back, Emma had barely time to step into the carriage with Sir William and the Dutch officers and drive to the theatre. There she created even more of a sensation by her girlish beauty and charm than if she had been in the most elegant evening gown.

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For the amusement of Hamilton's friends Emma began to pose in a series of 'living pictures,' and her manipulation of a scarf, as an indication of the characters portrayed, became so famous that she had imitators even in France and Germany. In Paris it was the lovely Juliette Récamier, the eccentric Thérèse Tallien, and Josephine Beauharnais who made the scarf dance fashionable; in Germany the actresses Händel-Schütz and Sophie Schröder; but it was Emily Hart, the mistress of the English Ambassador in Naples, who invented it. Her fame spread throughout Europe. Even Goethe, in his *Italienische Reise*, speaks of her in the following words:

The Chevalier Hamilton, so long resident here as English Ambassador, so long, too, connoisseur and student of art and nature, has found their counterpart and acme with exquisite delight in a lovely girl—English, and some twenty years of age. She is exceedingly beautiful and finely built. She wears a Greek garb becoming her to perfection. She then merely loosens her locks, takes a pair of shawls, and effects changes of posture, mood, gesture, mien, and appearance that make one really feel as if one were in some dream. Here is visible complete, and bodied forth in movements of surprising variety, all that so many artists have sought in vain to fix and render. Successively standing, kneeling, seated, reclining, grave, sad, sportive, teasing, abandoned, penitent, alluring, threatening, angered. One follows the other, and grows out of it. She knows how to choose and shift the simple folds of her kerchief for every expression, and to adjust it into a hundred kinds of head-gear. Her elderly knight holds the torches for her performance, and is absorbed in his soul's desire. In her he finds the charm of all antiques, the fair profiles on Sicilian coins, the Apollo Belvedere himself.

The German painter Tichbein painted several portraits of her, and Friedrich Rehberg published a volume of twenty copper-plates showing the 'attitudes.'

Emma's feet are said to have been large and badly formed, owing, no doubt, to the rough shoes she had worn as a child, and in her riper years she became somewhat stout. But, in her

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early twenties, when her natural beauty was reinforced by real histrionic gifts, she must have been irresistible, with a beauty impossible to overlook. When, as a sixteen-year-old girl, she appeared with Greville at Ranelagh, according to the report of an anonymous contemporary, her "nymph-like figure," her enchanting face, and her golden-brown hair attracted general attention, and aroused such admiration in the pleasure-garden that she was obliged to give to the circle of friends collected around her the pleasure "of a few highly delightful examples of her musical and histrionic talent." Greville, however, does not appear to have cared for this kind of display by his mistress, for on the homeward journey he reproached her, and never again took her to a public pleasure resort. Neither did he take her often to the theatre, for he had noticed that the stage had too strong an attraction for her. Perhaps she might have run away from him one day to embark on a career as an actress, which, for a girl like Emma, would have been disastrous. With Sir William Hamilton she was certainly in better hands: without having to tread the thorny path of the theatre she could develop and make use of her histrionic gifts as though she were on the stage. And possibly as an amateur she won greater fame for herself than she would have done as a professional.

She required very few properties for her living pictures. A chair, a few scarves, a few beautiful antique vases, a garland of flowers, a tambourine, and, for some of her poses, one or two tiny children—that was her whole apparatus. When she was acting all the windows were closed, and her figure was lighted only by a single candle. She knew so well how to manipulate the Turkish or Indian shawls that they represented anything she wished, and her metamorphoses took place so quickly that no change of costume occupied more than five minutes. Spectators were astounded at the rapidity of the transformation. On one occasion she represented a living picture of Guido's Madonna.

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In a few moments, with the aid of a slight change of dress and ornament, the Madonna had disappeared and was changed into a Bacchanalian bubbling with happiness, into Diana the huntress, and, again, to a Medici Venus.

As a dancer too Emma received high praise, and she had such success with her scarf dance that she received offers of engagements from a number of large theatres. She was offered a three years' engagement as "first dancer" in the Italian opera in Madrid at a large salary, and Covent Garden offered her £2000 for a single season. In her dances the whole gamut of feeling and experience was expressed in movement. Every step, every movement of her arms and hands, was a revelation. She danced national dances with perfect grace and always with an understanding of the appropriate national characteristics. No dancer ever danced so Bacchic a Bacchanalian, so wild and passionate a tarantella, as Lady Hamilton. Old Sir William was frequently her partner. He had always been an enthusiastic sportsman, a lover of hunting and all physical exercise, and he remained young and elastic even beside this young woman sparkling with life. When he was nearly seventy he danced a national dance with Emma—who meantime had become his wife—at a party in London, with such liveliness and for so long a spell that he somewhat exhausted his young partner.

With these dances, with her seductive sensuality, her charms, her coquetry and endearing kindliness, this English siren bewitched the victor of Aboukir and the Nile, Lord Nelson. He first saw her in the year 1793. He wrote to his wife:

I hope one day to be able to introduce Lady Hamilton to you. She is one of the most remarkable women in the world. She is a credit to her sex. Her kindness and Lord Hamilton's towards me is more than I can express in words.

But it was not until five years later, when Lady Hamilton, although still beautiful and desirable, no longer possessed her

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enchancing sylph-like figure and youthful freshness—she began to grow very stout in her early thirties—that he fell madly in love with her. She was one of those feminine beauties who, at all times, whether young or old, captivate men. And many considered her much later to be as charming as she was at the time when Romney called her his “divine lady.”

In honour of the victor Sir William and Lady Hamilton gave a large party. More than 1800 guests, the most beautiful and elegant women of Naples and of the Court, filled the wonderfully decorated apartments of the English Embassy. But Nelson saw only her, “the incomparable,” this “remarkable creature,” as she was called by Sir Gilbert Elliot, normally a cool-headed Englishman. On Nelson, the simple parson’s son, who, in spite of his victories and campaigns, knew little of the world and still less of women, the charming wife of the English Ambassador, surrounded by her crowd of admirers, acted as a veritable enchantress. Her dazzling, sensual beauty, the charm of her conversation, her sweet, attractive voice, her impulsive unself-consciousness, her passionate womanliness, so captivated him that he became her complete slave. Emma Hamilton from that time on possessed his heart, his senses, all his thoughts and actions. He did only what she wished. He thought only through her and with her, saw everything through her eyes—alas! not always to the benefit of himself and his fellow-creatures.

Since Emma had become Sir William Hamilton’s lawful wife she attained considerable influence at the Neapolitan Court, particularly through the extraordinary friendship which was shown to her by Queen Carolina. So long as she was only Hamilton’s mistress the Court could not, of course, give her official recognition, but soon after the Ambassador’s return from England, where he had married Emma in 1791, Queen Maria Carolina expressed a wish to see Emma presented at Court. A letter from the delighted Emma to her old friend Romney on the subject of this great honour shows us her

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sweet character, and her gratitude for fate's kindness to her, and also her naïve pleasure at the immense step upward which she, the poor little model and nursemaid, had taken.

She writes from Caserta on December 20, 1791 :

My dear friend, I have been received with open arms by all the Neapolitans of both sexes, by all the foreigners of any distinction. I have been presented to the Queen of Naples by her own desire ; she has shewn me all sorts of kind and affectionate attentions ; in short, I am the happiest woman in the world. Sir William is fonder of me every day, and I hope he will have no corse [*sic*] to repent of what he has done, for I feel so grateful to him that I think I shall never be able to make him amends for his goodness to me. But why do I tell you this ? You was the first dear friend I open'd my heart to ; you ought to know me. You have seen and discoursed with me in my poorer days, you have known me in my poverty and prosperity, and I had no occasion to have lived *for years* in poverty and distress, if I had not felt something of virtue in my mind. Oh, my dear friend, for a time I own through distress my virtue was vanquished, but my sense of virtue was not overcome. How grateful then do I feel to my dear, dear husband that has restored peace to my mind, that has given me honors, rank, and what is more, innocence and happiness. Rejoice with me, my dear sir, my friend, my more than father ; believe me, I am still that same Emma you knew me. If I could forget for a moment what I was, I ought to suffer. Command me in anything I can do for you here ; believe me, I shall have a real pleasure. Come to Naples, and I will be your model, anything to induce you to come, that I may have an opportunity to show my gratitude to you. . . . We have a many English at Naples, Ladys Malmsbury, Malden, Plymouth, Carnegie, and Wright, etc. They are very kind and attentive to me ; they all make it a point to be remarkably civil [*sic*] to me. Tell Hayly I am always reading his *Triumphs of Temper* ; it was that that made me Lady H., for God knows I had for five years enough to try my temper, and I am affraid if it had not been for the good example Serena taught me, my girdle wou'd have burst, and if it had I had been undone ; for Sir W. minds more temper than beauty. He therefore wishes Mr. Hayly wou'd come, that he might thank him for his sweet-tempered wife.

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Lady Hamilton's country residence at Caserta, as well as her home in Naples, was always filled with guests. And as she, as wife of the Ambassador, had to introduce to the Queen the English ladies who wished to be presented at Court, she lived in a continual whirl of *fêtes* and balls. The Court resided for a great part of the year at Caserta, but when it was not there, there was continual going to and fro between Caserta and Naples. It happened sometimes that Lady Hamilton would have fifty people to dine at her house in Naples, followed by a ball for three hundred dancers, and then, when the night was nearly gone and the dawn breaking, she would return to Caserta. Soon nothing was undertaken at Court, nothing decided, no entertainment arranged, without Lady Hamilton's assistance. The two women, herself and the pleasure-loving Queen, known as the Neapolitan Messallina, vied with each other in preparing new surprises for their sumptuous banquets. The Neapolitan Court had Emma Hamilton to thank that this luxurious life of pleasure did not consist merely of eating, drinking, and debauchery, but had added to it an air of artistic refinement. She was the best dancer among all the beautiful and graceful women who surrounded Maria Carolina. Her songs (which were sung in a rich voice, if not always quite in tune) and her 'attitudes' made her one of the most popular women at the Court. In political matters too, which do not belong to this narrative, she exercised an enormous influence. It is, indeed, difficult to say whether more was due in these affairs to the Ambassador himself or to his wife.

Over the Queen, at any rate, Lady Hamilton had unbounded power. She who in London had never been received at the Court of Queen Charlotte, from the first day of her acquaintance with the daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa had her completely in her power. Perhaps it was because there were so many points of correspondence, or of seeming correspondence, in their two lives. The debauched life of Queen Carolina gave her no right to censure Lady Hamilton's stormy



THE SNAKE IN THE GRASS
Oil-painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds. 1788

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past. The two women were drawn together by their strong passions, their elegance and coquetry, their complete contempt for all social and *bourgeois* morality. This last characteristic, in particular, was possessed to a high degree by the Queen, for it is said that not merely diplomacy and clever calculation were the motives which drew her so irresistibly to Lady Hamilton, but also her own vicious tendencies. She found in Emma, so scandal said, the willing accomplice of her Sapphic appetites, but it is pleasanter to believe that the relationship between the two women was one of friendship only. Carolina lavished rich gifts on Lady Hamilton. In August 1799, after the reconquest of Naples, when the *Foudroyant* reached Palermo with Nelson and Lady Hamilton on board, the Queen hurried at once to her friend, and presented her with a gold chain on which was hung a portrait set in valuable diamonds. Five days later she sent her two carriages full of costly dresses and a piece of jewellery worth £1000. The value of the gifts which Lady Hamilton received from the Queen at this time is said to have reached the sum of £6000.

The reconquest of Naples gave Lady Hamilton an opportunity to show her great social powers, and to indulge her love of *fêtes* and balls and theatrical performances. So, while thousands were dying of hunger in Naples and Malta, luxury and extravagance reigned at the Court in Palermo. Emma and Carolina arranged masques and balls with a 'Temple of Fame,' in which Sir William and Lady Hamilton and Lord Nelson were represented by wax figures. Lady Hamilton as Goddess of Victory, with a laurel wreath in her hands, was shown crowning the Admiral, who was led forward by Sir William Hamilton. The festivities, gala dinners, and balls on board the English men-of-war in the harbour never ceased. They were all arranged by Lady Hamilton, and the Admiral approved everything she did. She appeared on Nelson's ship like a second Cleopatra. The friends surrounding her seemed like so many courtiers, and she was greeted as though she were

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a queen, with salutes from the whole fleet. On one occasion she had arranged a dinner on the *Minotaur*, which was commanded by Sir Thomas Louis. Great trestles were brought on deck for the banquet, and the guns moved to one side, in order to make room for the tables, loaded with the most costly foods, fruit, and wines. Even Nelson thought this was going too far. When he saw what was happening to his man-of-war he said angrily to one of the officers: "Damn it, I wish all this business were at an end. My ship looks like a restaurant." But when he saw Lady Hamilton's radiant face and happy smile, when she reassured him with her coaxing voice, his bad humour fled, and the gay feast lasted far into the night. At the desire of his beloved, Lord Nelson had the ship illuminated after dark, and at every toast the guns on board saluted and were answered from the forts on the mainland.

The Admiral was incapable of refusing anything to Lady Hamilton, capricious as she was. Sometimes the spirit of adventure, her love for a life of vagabondage, would break out in her anew, and she would make him accompany her through all the low haunts and dens of Naples. Then she would be seized with a mad desire to wander with him incognito through the most disreputable streets and among the wharves of the city. Mask and domino, or sometimes male costume, protected her on these escapades. In the Admiral's company she visited public brothels and spent evenings with professional prostitutes, her histrionic gifts enabling her successfully to play the young man with these women. Lord Nelson regarded these dubious pleasures and crazy doings only as an additional charm in the character of his friend. She was the woman whom he loved and desired, who seemed to offer to him as no other could a new and radiant happiness in love. He once wrote to her:

You do not need to fear any woman in the world. All but you are nothing to me. I know one woman only, for who can

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compare with my Emma? You are incomparable. No one is worthy even to clean your shoes.

He was completely lost in her. In the year 1800 he took her and her husband to England with him. As he no longer wished to live with his wife, with whom he had shared many years of untroubled married life, he went to live with the Hamiltons in Piccadilly. Although such three-cornered relationships were not at all rare in the eighteenth century, it might have been supposed that Sir William Hamilton knew exactly what the relationship of his wife to Nelson was. Yet he seems, up to the end, to have considered their friendship purely Platonic, for when he died, two years later, he said in his last moments to his friend: "My brave and great Nelson, our friendship has lasted long, and I am proud of my friend. I hope that you will see that Emma obtains justice from the ministers. You know what great services she has done her country. Take care of my dear wife." Then he turned to Emma and said: "My incomparable Emma, you have never injured me in thought or word or deed. Let me once more thank you for your warm affection all through our ten years' happy union." What was the power and secret of this woman who, even while secretly committing adultery, retained the respect and love of her husband?

In January 1801 she had borne her lover a daughter, who was registered as Horatia Thompson Nelson and was adopted by the Admiral. Although Lady Hamilton brought this child into the world in the house of her husband, Hamilton knew nothing about it. She succeeded cleverly in hiding her condition from him, and in this her wide flowing garments were of great assistance. Hamilton, too, was very old, and for two years before his death he was very delicate and often confined to his bed, so that he would hardly ever have entered his wife's bedroom. When she was confined he was told that she was ill, but the truth of her indisposition was hidden from him. On February 20 he wrote to Nelson that Emma was not well,

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that she had pains in the stomach and sickness, and had been obliged to take tartar emetic. The good old man was even further deceived. When little Horatia was born she was taken secretly from the house to a wet-nurse. Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton spoke of this child in their letters, as long as the old man lived, only as the daughter of a Mrs Thompson, so that when the nurse brought the child to the house one day to show it to the happy father, Lord Nelson, Hamilton felt no suspicion when he was told that it was the child of Mrs Thompson, who wished to seek Lord Nelson's favour.

In the same year Lady Hamilton bought, on behalf of Nelson, the beautiful country house Merton Place, in Surrey. This was mainly intended to be a dwelling, later, for Emma and her daughter Horatia. Lady Hamilton furnished the house completely in her own taste, and made of it, as Nelson wrote, "the most beautiful place in the world." They spent there, and in Hamilton's house in Piccadilly, a very pleasurable and merry winter, with continual parties and entertainments of all kinds. Lady Hamilton often thought of the time, twenty years before, when she had lived in Edgware Row as Romney's model and Greville's mistress. Now she possessed everything that she could wish for, and she spent the seasons of 1801, 1802, and 1803 in London, living in a style of the greatest luxury and extravagance. In her house the most fashionable society forgathered, in spite of the whispering that went on about her in London. English Society in the eighteenth century was more tolerant than it is to-day. Lady Hamilton's relationship to Nelson was spoken about quite openly, and although nobody believed in Platonic love between the two except Sir William Hamilton, nobody was shocked that all three lived amicably together in one house. The greatest respect was accorded to Lady Hamilton; and even Nelson's nearest relatives, who thought highly of his legal wife, frequented the house as friends of his mistress. Nevertheless a great change had taken place in Emma's

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character. Out of the modest little friend of Greville, who seemed to be "absolutely indifferent to material interests," there had developed a most exigent, greedy, and pleasure-seeking woman, who could never have enough of festivities, nor of clothes and fripperies. The Neapolitan Court had spoiled her. She contracted debt upon debt, without knowing in the least whether she would ever be able to pay them.

Old Sir William Hamilton was no longer equal to this wild life. Sometimes he felt himself to be almost forgotten by his wife; she had eyes and ears only for Nelson, for her pleasures, for her living pictures and her innumerable guests. Hamilton, who had spent forty years of his life at the restless Court of Naples, longed for peace in his last years, and felt that he had a right to it. But Emma was not of this opinion. The older she grew, the more she demanded the incense of personal admiration, the more recklessly she threw herself into the whirl of pleasure. At such moments old Sir William's eyes were opened, and on one occasion he committed his discontent to paper. He wrote:

I am arrived at the age when some repose is really necessary and I promised myself a quiet home, and although I was sensible, and I said so when I married that I should be superannuated when my wife would be in her full beauty and vigour of youth, that time is arrived and we must make the best of it, for the comfort of both parties.

He regrets that his tastes and those of Emma are now so very different. He wanted to live in quiet retirement, not to have a dozen or more guests at table, and different ones every day, which was just as fatiguing for him as attendance at the Court of Naples. He wished only for the society of his own family, and could not but be conscious that his wife was giving all her attention to Lord Nelson. He concludes with a pathetic sentence recording his confidence in the "purity of Lord Nelson's friendship." Nelson was his best friend.

Hamilton actually considered whether it would not be

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better to separate from a wife too young for his failing powers. He felt, however, that such a separation would be painful to Nelson, and, while anxious about Emma's increasing extravagance, he was willing to go on so long as personal expenditure and household expenses did not assume immoderate proportions. As he could not hope to live many more years, he felt every moment was precious to him. He would have liked, sometimes, to be his own master and to be allowed to pass his time according to his own inclinations: fishing in the Thames, or making more frequent visits in London to the museums, picture auctions, the Royal Society, and the Tuesday Club. He was not long to have a chance of enjoying these quiet pleasures. He fell ill and died at his house in Piccadilly on April 6, 1803.

His widow, who was not left very well off, was obliged to move to Clarges Street, and henceforward spent her life partly here and partly in Merton Place. Nelson regarded her as his lawful wife. He was passionately attached to their little girl, and had done all he could for the child Horatia, even before the death of Sir William Hamilton. He did not know that Emma, as a girl, had had an illegitimate daughter, possibly even two children; he seems to have had no doubt that Horatia was Emma's first child. In any case, she knew how to hide from Nelson a secret which any other man would have suspected. Just as she had kept the birth of Horatia from Sir William, she kept from Nelson the fact of her earlier daughter. He trusted her absolutely. In March 1801 he wrote to her:

Now, my only beloved wife, which you are in my eyes and in the eyes of Heaven, I can give free vent to my feelings, for I believe that Oliver will faithfully deliver this letter. You know, my dear Emma, there is nothing in the world I would not do to live with you and to have our dear little child with us. . . . I love you. I love you as I love no one else. I have never had a sweet token of love, until you gave me one, and thank God you never gave such a one to anyone else! . . . I burn all your dear



THE COQUETTES

Colour lithograph published by McLean. 1833

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letters ; I do this for your safety. Do you burn mine also, for they might make mischief, and only harm the two of us, if they were found.

And another time : "I hope that in a short time you will be my Duchess of Brontë, and then we will snap our fingers at everyone."

This immense happiness was brought to an abrupt end by Nelson's summons to the Mediterranean Fleet. Emma, it is true, had the adventurous idea of taking Horatia and Nelson's niece, who lived in her house, of embarking on the *Victory* and accompanying her lover on his campaign ; but the Admiral succeeded in dissuading her from this mad idea. She remained in London.

The pain of the parting was soon forgotten. She led in Merton Place and in her own house a very wild life, so that she could not manage on the income which Sir William Hamilton had left her and with the £1200 which she received for her keep from Nelson. Surrounded by a swarm of parasites, she lived riotously. She gathered about her women who, like herself, had a life of adventure behind them, and among them her intimate friend, the famous and greatly gifted singer at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, Mrs Billington. Mrs Billington was of German birth, but her greatest success had come to her in London. Her amours were numerous and notorious. She had had royalty at her feet, and had led captive the Duke of Rutland, Viceroy of Ireland. Like Lady Hamilton, Mrs Billington was endowed with many talents and with a voluptuous beauty well fitted to turn men's heads.

Among the men in Lady Hamilton's circle in London was the eighty-year-old Duke of Queensberry, who was well known as the greatest rake in London. He had been, in his time, a very elegant man of the world, a friend of the famous dandy George Selwyn, a great art connoisseur and sportsman, and his passions long outlived his youth. His house in Piccadilly was known among his contemporaries as the "hell of

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Oriental vice." His appetite for pleasure was just as keen at eighty as it had been at twenty; and when he could no longer run about London seeking adventures he settled down in his house near Hyde Park Corner, where he spent his whole day at the window, winking and nodding at all the handsome women who passed. His groom was stationed perpetually at the door to call in any who would consent to enter. His body had become a wreck, but not his mind. Nor had he lost all his fascination, for, when he lay dying in December 1810, his bed was covered with at least seventy love-letters written to him by women and girls of every type, and from the most varied classes of society, from duchesses down to women of the street. No longer able to open or read these letters, he ordered that they should be laid unopened on his bed, where they remained until his death.

This Duke of Queensberry was among the most ardent admirers of Lady Hamilton, and it is possible that her relations with him were not purely Platonic. In any case, he was the only one of her friends at this period who gave her anything. He left her, as he did a few other of his former loves, an annuity of £500, which, unfortunately, owing to quarrels about the estate, was never paid to her.

Not all Lady Hamilton's friends were unselfish. Most of them made use of her good nature, borrowed money from her which they never repaid, revelled at her table, and courted her and flattered her vanity in order to profit at her expense. Nelson often lectured her in his letters about economy, and warned her against "the brood who sat down to loaded tables and otherwise cared nothing about her." When he returned to Merton Place in August 1805 for a short time, after an absence of two years, he was very much displeased that his lovely country seat resembled the Neapolitan Court so closely in its frivolity and lack of quiet. Beside famous English actresses, musicians, ballad-writers, opera-singers, the social circle of his incomparable Emma was made up of loose-living

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clubmen, adventurers, rakes, aristocratic or otherwise, all the most unsuitable companions for a woman of Lady Hamilton's temperament. But he was much too happy at seeing his beloved and his child again to be able to reproach her for her frivolous mode of life. So long as she was enjoying herself and was well, so long as she was praised and flattered for her beauty, he forgave and condoned everything. In Merton, therefore, even while Nelson was present, the gaiety and extravagance continued unabated. From near and far visitors flocked in to see the celebrated hero, and to offer tokens of their respect to him and his friend. His relationship with Lady Hamilton was, with few exceptions, accepted by everyone in Society, and he always introduced her at receptions as his wife, merely adding regretfully: "Unfortunately she is not yet Lady Nelson."

In September 1805 Nelson was recalled to the fleet. He had but three thoughts, the French, Emma, and his child, and he made what provision he could for all three. He seemed to have a foreboding that he would not return, although, as his ship dropped down the Channel, he continued to send messages of comfort. "With God's blessing we shall meet again. Kiss dear Horatia a thousand times." And Emma replied: "May God send you victory, and home to your Emma, Horatia, and paradise Merton, for when you are there it will be paradise."

At the very last moment before the battle he sat down in his cabin to write to Lady Hamilton:

My dearest, beloved Emma, the dear friend of my bosom, the signal has been made that the enemies' combined fleet is coming out of port. May the God of Battles crown my endeavour with success; at all events I will take care that my name shall ever be most dear to you and Horatia, both of whom I love as much as my own life; and as my last writing before the battle will be to you, so I hope in God that I shall live to finish my letter after the battle. . . .

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There is no need to tell again the story of Trafalgar. Nelson fell on the quarter-deck of the *Victory* with his back broken. In the cockpit the surgeon bent over him and heard :

Doctor, I told you so ; doctor, I am gone. . . . I have to leave Lady Hamilton and my adopted daughter Horatia as a legacy to my country. . . . How goes the day with us, Hardy ? . . . Come nearer to me. Pray let my dear Lady Hamilton have my hair, and all other things belonging to me.

Then, with his dying breath :

Remember that I leave Lady Hamilton and my daughter to my country. . . . Thank God I have done my duty.

Lady Hamilton was stricken prostrate by the blow, and lay ill in bed for many weeks. She did not attend the official funeral. Nelson's wishes that she should be provided for were disregarded. Her estate became steadily more and more encumbered. After the death of Nelson she was nominally in receipt of some £2000 a year, but this was all swallowed up by her debts and her extravagance. In the summer of 1813 she was arrested for debt and consigned to the King's Bench Prison. Here she remained for a year, when she was released on bail by Alderman Joshua Jonathan Smith, with whose assistance she escaped to Calais, where she died on January 15, 1815. The story, however, that she died in extreme want, and was buried in a cheap deal coffin, with an old petticoat for pall, has been disproved. She died a Catholic, and was buried with the full rites of the Church. She was still far from being an old woman, but over-indulgence in the pleasures of the table had ruined her health and impaired her figure. She had become very fat and shapeless, and nothing remained of her former beauty but her melodious voice and her clear blue eyes.

CHAPTER IX

PRINCESSES OF THE EMPIRE

WHEN Napoleon placed himself at the head of France his glory and fame spread their brilliance over all his relations. His sisters, all three elegant, extravagant, and coquettish, found themselves the leaders of fashion, the queens of a new Court. Among them the frivolous Pauline—familiarly, Paulette—who was the wife first of General Leclerc and later of Prince Borghese, took to her new station with the greatest ease.

The life of this charming but feather-brained and entirely immoral woman is nothing more than a chain of love affairs, wild caprices, and mad escapades. For her brother's political aims, for the complications of foreign policy, she cared nothing. For her the main interest of life lay in the exploiting of her own feminine charm. She did not yearn, as did her two sisters, Élise and Caroline, for a throne, for honour and glory. It was sufficient for her that she was a beautiful woman and had always a retinue of admirers around her. "I do not like crowns," she used to say. "If I had wanted one I could have had it. I leave that to my relations." The only kingdom that she made claim to was the realm of love and beauty, and in that she was absolute queen, just as she was in the kingdom of elegance. She was passionate by nature, and her complete lack of morality and modesty of mind, her neglect of all dignity, and her carelessness of public opinion permitted this sister of Napoleon to enjoy to her heart's content the pleasures of the gallant and elegant world. She was a born priestess of Venus, the loveliest member of the Emperor's Court, perhaps the most beautiful woman in Paris. At fourteen years

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old her beauty was fully developed, and turned the heads of all the young men of her acquaintance. Mme Letizia Bonaparte thought it advisable to find a husband as quickly as possible for the lovely, wild, sensual girl, and at seventeen Paulette was already the wife of General Leclerc. At that age wisdom and propriety are not natural accomplishments, even in the wife of a general, and this marriage of Paulette's produced no visible change in her character. She was and remained frivolous and extravagant, and gave her coquetry full play. She was one of the most desired, most celebrated, and most popular women of her time, for her beauty had so great a power that she had no need of intellect or knowledge in order to shine. It was sufficient for men to see her and to hear her silvery laughter. She had, it is true, a gift for repartee, and could often make a witty and amusing answer, which gave an impression of intelligence. Her charming good-nature won all hearts. Not only was she beautiful and passionate, but, when it became known that she did not regard herself as strictly bound either to her first husband or to her second, she was adored and honoured as a goddess. When the writer Esme-nard saw her as a young woman on the ship which bore her and General Leclerc to San Domingo, to a victory as yet uncertain, she was on deck, lying "with incomparable grace on a couch. Her enchanting beauty was reminiscent of the Galatea of the Greeks, or of Venus rising from the sea." Even then she held court like a queen on board ship, as though she knew that she and her sisters were destined to wear crowns.

Indeed, this woman, who spared her body nothing, but committed every kind of excess, who thought of nothing but love, remained for a long time incomparably beautiful. On this point all her contemporaries agree, even women who were not numbered among her friends. Georgette Ducrest, who was one of the adherents of Josephine Bonaparte, called Paulette Bonaparte the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. No one dared to find the slightest fault in her. Mme



PAULINE BONAPARTE
Oil-painting by R. Lefèvre

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Junot, Duchesse d'Abrantès, a clever memoirist, says that it is impossible to form a conception of the perfect beauty of this remarkable woman; and the Countess Potocka expresses her frank admiration in the following words:

Pauline was the type of classical beauty which is seen in Greek statues. In spite of all she did to hasten the decay of her physique, as a woman of ripe years she could still, with the aid of a little art, bear away the palm from all women of her age. Not one would have ventured to contest her right to the apple which, it is said, the sculptor Canova handed to her after he had seen her unclothed. With the finest and most regular features imaginable she combined a most shapely figure, admired (alas!) too often.

She was extraordinarily small and well made. Extravagant as a goddess, the lovely Paulette was as lavish with her charms as Heaven had been when it endowed her with them. Nor was she niggardly in her dress. As Princess Borghese she possessed the most wonderful diamonds in the whole of Paris, excelling even the Empress Josephine, whose jewels were worth millions. Camillo Borghese gave his young wife, as a small bridal gift, £45,000, with which she might buy anything she liked, and he added to the costly heirlooms of his family, which outshone in splendour anything Paris had ever seen, £70,000 worth of new jewellery. Paulette's jewel-boxes contained the most wonderful precious stones: sapphires, rubies, emeralds, pearls of the first water, brilliants, antique gems, cameos—in short, jewellery worth about one and a half millions. The dresses and underwear of Princess Borghese eclipsed anything ever worn hitherto. She possessed more than six hundred dresses, among them *toilettes* worth 40,000 to 50,000 francs. Her horses, her carriages, and the livery of her servants made a sensation in the French capital, and, as the first of Napoleon's sisters to bear a princely title, when she paid visits she usually drove with six horses. The servants at Saint-Cloud, at Josephine's palace at Malmaison, at Joseph's house at Mortefontaine,

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at Plessis-Chamant, where Lucien Bonaparte lived, announced the beautiful and elegant woman, with a certain pride, as "her Highness, the Princess Borghese." Pauline was delighted, and still more so that her sisters and sisters-in-law at that time were only called plain "Madame So-and-so."

But, to her sorrow, she soon had to leave the beautiful, vivid capital of France and follow her husband to Rome. She had an unconquerable aversion from the Eternal City. Pauline Borghese, of whom Napoleon said she was a Roman from the top of her head to the soles of her feet, was bored in Rome. And yet in the whole world there was no more noble or more fitting frame for her classical beauty. In the castles and palaces of the Prince wealth was combined with taste and magnificence with art. The Villa Borghese might have been made for this Venus, who glided like a goddess through the almost classical rooms, in soft, flowing garments, her lovely limbs barely covered. In the Greek statues, in which the apartments of the castle were so rich, she saw the counterpart of her own beauty, and she must have been happy here had she had any appreciation of the antique, or of art at all. Her tastes, however, lay in another direction, and all these treasures of art meant nothing to her. It meant nothing to her that she was indulged in every whim by her husband's family, and that wealth and abundance were at her disposal. She longed to be away from this dreary town, in France, in Paris, at her brother's Court, where Josephine, Hortense, and her own sisters played their parts; only she, the most beautiful of all, was shut out from it. She would so much have loved to be the queen of fashion in Paris. How she would have delighted in the festivities at Saint-Cloud! How she would have enjoyed eclipsing every one with her own dazzling beauty! Eventually, however, when all the Bonapartes were wearing crowns and ruling kingdoms, she too received a little throne, and as Princess and Duchess of Guastalla was able to hold a Court of her own. But, as neither Prince Borghese nor his wife troubled

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their heads about the government of the little principality, it was taken away from them by the Emperor. He left them only the ducal title; and Prince Borghese was appointed Governor-General of Piedmont.

But Paulette refused to shut herself up in Turin. She passed her time at the fashionable spas, and carried on her love intrigues at Aix-les-Bains, Nice, Plombières, Gréoux, where the stern eye of her brother could not watch her. She was accompanied everywhere by several of her lovers, who had to share her favours, and she lived a very licentious life in Nice until Napoleon intervened and recalled the frivolous woman to her husband's side in Turin. He had heard what a strange life his sister was leading in the Villa Vinaille, and of the licence which was allowed in her *entourage*, and how extravagant she was in some directions and how mean in others. While she was measuring out the coffee and sugar for her household, and reducing it to the minimum, she had sent to her every day from Paris a carriage full of new fashions: dresses, hats, underwear, perfumery, lace, ribbons, and every kind of frippery.

As can be imagined, the return from Nice to Turin was no easy matter for this queen of luxury. She required at least seven or eight heavily loaded carts to bring to Turin all her delightful and seductive *toilettes*, the thousand trifles which were essential to the life of an elegant and self-indulgent woman. But, at last, everything was ready, and Princess Borghese appeared dressed for the journey in a charming amaranth-red cashmere 'amazon,' which fitted closely to her slender, delicate limbs. This marvellous travelling dress was embroidered all over in gold, and was a model created by the Parisian dressmaker Leger.

In Turin Paulette and her husband lived at first in the palace of Chablais. But the Princess Borghese found this much too small for her station and wealth. Her income had again been increased by one and a half millions of francs, for that was

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the sum allotted to Prince Borghese as Governor-General of Piedmont. Her Court was nearly as magnificent as the French Imperial Court in Paris, and Princess Borghese imitated in a most ridiculous way at her receptions the habits and customs which Napoleon and Josephine had introduced in their own circle. But Paulette played her part successfully; superficial pomp was very much to her taste. Dressed in the most costly and tasteful gowns, she could display herself here in all her beauty.

Nevertheless, she was bored in Turin, particularly with her husband. She had not much intellect herself, but Prince Borghese had even less: he was interested in nothing but eating and sleeping. At last Napoleon allowed Pauline to return to Paris, where she lived at first in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and soon after in the lovely palace at Neuilly, which Napoleon gave to her when his sister Caroline mounted the Neapolitan throne with Joachim Murat.

In Neuilly Pauline was able to live more freely and under less observation than in the immediate vicinity of the Imperial Court. She admitted to the palace only those she wished. Napoleon gave her an income of 130,000 francs a month. She was allowed to retain her household, and her husband had his income as Governor. She enjoyed herself immensely. She lacked neither company nor pleasure at Neuilly, while the care of her health and particularly the cult of her body occupied nearly the whole of her day. In contrast with the beauties of the eighteenth century, who seldom or never bathed, the elegant and pampered women of the Empire believed in scrupulous cleanliness. Their flimsy clothing alone necessitated this, for the body was so much displayed to every curious eye that even the slightest neglect would have been embarrassing. Pauline Borghese bathed every day in milk, and kept a young negro to lift her into her bath and out of it again. The Emperor did not approve of his sister's free manners, but when she was given to understand that it was not



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proper for so young a woman to allow herself to be lifted into her bath by a man she said, innocently: "My God! But a nigger is not a man!" She reintroduced the custom of receiving the gentlemen of her *entourage* and her acquaintance while she was in the bath. What the eighteenth century had allowed to women she thought she could allow herself at her brother's Court, although ladies' levees had long gone out of fashion, and the Empire had introduced much stricter customs. But Paulette Borghese cared neither for manners nor for customs, nor for the admonitions of her brother the Emperor. She promenaded naked in front of her ladies-in-waiting for hours at a time—it seemed, indeed, as though she found a special attraction in posing as a Venus to her own sex and having her faultless beauty admired.

Paulette introduced another fashion. Many elegant ladies of the Consulate and of the Empire would have liked to reintroduce morning receptions in bed, and it was soon no rare thing for women of the world, if it appealed to them, to follow the example of the lovely Princess Borghese. The musician and composer Reichardt tells of an experience during his stay in Paris under the Consulate. He was invited by a very distinguished and highly respected young Society woman to give her a music lesson. An appointment was made for him to come at two o'clock, and he arrived punctually. But what was his astonishment to find that the lady, instead of being seated at the piano, was still in bed:

My beautiful young lady lay, as though posing for a picture, in her lovely large Grecian bed, under fine white linen, over which were scattered plump, violet-blue silk cushions. On either side of the bed were lovely Greek vases; on the footstool at the end of the bed were the daintiest white dancing shoes, left there from the night before. . . . Her right arm placed charmingly under her delicate bare head, and her left knee bent up under the soft covers, the lady greeted me pleasantly, without saying a word about a situation which was so pleasing a surprise for me, and bade me sit down by her bed.

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It was again just as it was in the period of gallantry, with the difference that then gentlemen were not surprised to be received in this way by a lady in her bedroom, but took it for granted, because it was the custom.

Pauline Borghese would have suited that earlier period well. She made a real cult of her body. She would stand for a long time in front of her gilt mirror (which in those days was called a *psyche*) and caressingly stroke her delicate limbs, or she would practise the most charming poses in front of the glass. She loved herself better than anyone else, and to her own person she displayed a loyalty and steadfastness which she never manifested toward any of her lovers. She had so many of these that it would be impossible to enumerate them. But she handled her amours with that delightful frivolity which is found only in the true amateur of love. Beugnot likens her to an Atalanta hovering over flowers and sucking their honey without leaving any outward trace of her touch. But the happy lovers felt the traces all too well. Once she had dropped the sweet poison of her love into their hearts they could never forget her.

She enjoyed every kind of romantic adventure, and the intimate stories which were current about many of her relationships she herself found as amusing as anyone. About the year 1810 she gave her favour, among others, to an elegant young officer on the General Staff of Marshal Berthier. This was the twenty-five-year-old Jules de Canouville. He was passionate, frivolous, and heedless, and these qualities pleased Pauline. Neither of them made the slightest attempt to keep their relationship secret. Canouville came daily to Neuilly, and the Princess went about with him openly. One day she had toothache, and a dentist had to be called. He came, and, being conducted into the boudoir of Princess Borghese, found her in the company of a distinguished young man who was wearing a light house coat and lying negligently on a *chaise longue*. He displayed the utmost solicitude, and bade the dentist be

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very careful not to hurt the Princess. When Pauline cried out and writhed with pain the young man soothed her, telling her to be sensible and let the dentist draw out the bad teeth which had prevented them both from sleeping for three nights. So the little operation was successfully performed. Satisfied, the dentist left his exalted patient, and as he stepped into the ante-room he was immediately surrounded by the ladies and gentlemen of the Court, who all wanted to know how her Imperial Highness was. The dentist told them, and could not find enough praise for the tender way in which the young Prince had cared for his wife. He thought it must be a very happy marriage. The courtiers had great difficulty in preventing themselves from bursting into laughter; they saw at once the worthy man's mistake. It was only too well known that Prince Borghese for a long time had not been admitted to his wife's boudoir or bedroom, and that sometimes he was not even allowed to enter Neuilly.

When Pauline Borghese had to live in Rome again after her brother's fall she was ill. None the less she entertained her friends royally, sometimes in the charming Villa Paolina, on the Porta Pia, sometimes in the wonderful Villa Borghese or in the Sciarra Palace. Her evening parties and concerts were renowned for their brilliance, and, in spite of her frivolous mode of life, her greatest friends and admirers were among the higher clergy. "Since the time of Pope Joan," says Lady Morgan, "no lady has ever been so surrounded by Cardinals as Pauline."

In the year 1825 death claimed the beautiful woman to whom life and its enjoyments had meant so much, but to her last hour Pauline Borghese remained true woman. She felt her end approaching. She knew that death was waiting for her. But Death was a man! He too should only see her as the woman she had been in her lifetime, beautiful and worthy of adoration. She asked her attendants to put on her the most splendid Court dress she possessed, to deck her out in all her

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diamonds, to dress her hair, to rouge her face, to powder and perfume her, so that she might appear before his Majesty Death in royal array, as she had appeared in the days of the glory of the French Imperial Court. Tremblingly her little hands sought a mirror. She wanted to assure herself that there was still a remnant in her face of that beauty which had once made it so enchanting. Despairingly the poor vain creature clung to this last hope. Perhaps, too, this last wish was fulfilled. Maybe in her last moment her face was irradiated with that unearthly brilliance which Death sometimes gives to the dying. Then, content with herself, she could leave the world in unchanging beauty. But even this did not satisfy her. She asked that they should cover her face with a thick white veil when she had breathed her last, so that no one should witness how her death agony and the beginning of decay might change her features. She asked, too, that her body should not be opened after death. No scalpel should touch the skin or mangle the limbs which at the height of her beauty the chisel of Canova had reproduced for posterity. So she left the world, like that other great artist in love, the Pompadour, in all her beauty, still young, only forty-five years old!

She had survived her sister-in-law Josephine, her greatest enemy and rival in elegant extravagance at the Imperial Court, by ten years! Josephine had retained her reputation as an elegant woman up to the year 1809, and had, in spite of her years, outshone many a younger woman at Court. Her thirst for luxury was so great that not even her income as Empress sufficed for her needs. She had at her disposal for personal expenditure 600,000 francs. In addition to this amount she had 130,000 francs for small presents and charities, and one might have supposed that she could pay for the needs of her toilet out of this. But no! Josephine was so extravagant, capricious, and foolish in her expenditure that she was perpetually in debt, and was often forced to draw upon Napoleon's private purse. Her private rooms in the Tuileries, at Saint-Cloud,



AT THE DRESSMAKER'S
Lithograph by N.-E. Maurin. Paris.

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at Fontainebleau and Malmaison, were exactly like dress *salons* and shops, save that complete confusion reigned in them. Chairs, stools, tables, and divans were strewn with costly stuffs: brocades, lace, pieces of silk, as well as flowers and feathers, which had been brought for her approval. Her rooms were always full of modistes, dressmakers, milliners, jewellers, carpet and furniture merchants, and artists, particularly painters. She had her portrait painted almost daily. These pictures she would then give away freely to her *entourage*, even to her ladies' maids and dressmakers. "Ornaments, shawls, materials, and every kind of gewgaw were perpetually being brought to her," says Mme de Rémusat in her memoirs.

She bought everything without ever asking the price. At the very beginning [of her husband's reign] she let her maids of honour and the ladies of the Court know that they were to have no control over her wardrobe. Everything was arranged by herself and her seven or eight ladies' maids. She rose at nine o'clock, and took a very long time over her toilet. She made a great secret of certain details, and as a rule she herself attended to her cosmetics and painted her face, for she wanted no one to know by what means she kept herself young. When all that was finished she had her hair dressed. For this she wore a long, very elegant lace-trimmed and embroidered dressing jacket. Her chemises and petticoats were also richly embroidered and made of the finest cambric trimmed with lace. She changed her chemise and all her underwear three times a day, and wore only new silk stockings which had never been washed. While her hair was being dressed the ladies-in-waiting, who had been kept outside the doors of her dressing-room, were allowed to come in. Large baskets were then brought to her, containing all sorts of dresses, hats, and shawls; in summer richly embroidered dresses of muslin or gauze; in winter long robes of woollen materials or velvet. From these she selected the gown she wished to wear. In the morning she always wore a hat trimmed with flowers and feathers and a shawl which enveloped her whole person. She possessed from three hundred to four hundred of these shawls, and all kinds of things were made out of them—dresses, bed-covers, and

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cushions for her dogs. One of these Indian shawls she wore over her shoulders all the morning, and knew how to drape it with a grace possessed by no one but herself. Napoleon thought that she was too much covered by these shawls, and sometimes he tore them from her and threw them into the fire, but then Josephine would immediately ask her maid for another one.

A single one of these cashmere shawls cost a trifle of 10,000 to 12,000 francs. They played so great a part under the Empire that they were regarded as pieces of furniture or property which could be handed down from generation to generation. Lady Morgan, in her book on France, writes :

This elegant product of Indian industry is an indispensable article for all ladies. They place such value on them that one is tempted to believe that a shawl of this kind possesses some magic power.

The first question when two ladies of the Empire met was always : "And how many cashmeres have you, my dear?" Those who had none could make no pretension to fashion or elegance.

This rage for Indian shawls, as indeed the whole Oriental tendency which was the dominant feature of feminine elegance in the period of the Consulate and the Empire, had been introduced into France by the army returning from Egypt, and Josephine, the wife of the First Consul, was naturally the first to take it up. She had begun the fashion for antique cameos after the Italian campaign, and she now introduced Oriental embroidery, turbans of gold *lamé*, and Indian silks. Her sisters-in-law immediately followed suit. Caroline Murat, afterward Queen of Naples, often wore ornaments made from engraved gems dug up in Herculaneum and Pompeii. The fashion spread. Heads and arms were covered with them. On belts, on shoulder-knots, and down the seams of dresses antique stones were arranged, the Italian earth carefully left between the stones and the setting. All the ladies of the Court indulged in these extravagant decorations made of precious

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stones ; no one wanted to be out of the mode. They had no need to be either, for the men, the great generals, the marshals, the new dukes and princes, saw to it that their wives did not lack jewellery. Mme de Rémusat relates that the wife of General Junot, later Duchesse d'Abrantès, had diamonds sent to her in cases from her husband in Portugal, and that the jewellery of the wife of General Duroc comprised stones and pearls worth 500,000 francs ; Mme Ney possessed jewels worth over 100,000 francs, and Josephine's pearls alone were valued at over a million francs. Among other things she had made for herself in the year 1808 a collar of twenty-four cameos and 2275 pearls, but she was unable to wear it because it was too heavy. Reichhardt relates, in a letter to his wife dated December 10, 1802, that he had seen Mme Bonaparte, who already, as wife of the First Consul, held a sort of Court, in a morning dress trimmed with precious stones.

Mme Bonaparte to-day, although only in her morning *toilette*, was dressed in white satin with a trimming of wide lace. In her dark brown hair she had a sort of diadem of three rows of large stones, among which were three medallions of antique gems.

As the ladies of the Napoleonic Court had plenty of leisure, Josephine especially, for she had no taste for reading or any other intellectual occupation, they could occupy themselves entirely in adorning their persons, in attending to their *toilettes*, their houses, their flowers and gardens. Josephine had a particular love of flowers and birds, and the rarest plants and the most wonderful exotic birds adorned her hothouses and aviaries. The frivolities and vanities of the toilet took up most of her day, and not only Josephine's day, but the day of most of the other elegant ladies of the Empire. What time was not occupied in the care of their bodies and their beauty was frittered away in inventing and selecting dresses, hats, shawls, ornaments, and the thousand-and-one trifles of the toilet.

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The lady of the Empire rose late, betook herself to her Chinese perfumed bath, was rubbed down and massaged, had her whole body perfumed, and was manicured and pedicured. Then, when she left her bathroom, fresh as a rose, she threw on a lace-trimmed, richly embroidered white cotton morning gown and breakfasted. In the meantime the milliners, dress-makers, and needlewomen came and received her commands. Thereupon the indispensable *maître de salut et de présentation* was announced, who had not only to show the lady of the world all the newest dance steps, but to teach her also how to make a greeting, how to curtsy, how to move the arms and hands most gracefully, and how to sway from the hips. The woman of the Empire had to excel in all these things if she wished to have the reputation of being fashionable. It was a new period, and, as Max von Boehn aptly remarks in his book *Das Empire* :

As *parvenus*, they were in a dilemma; they had no style, and did not know where to get it. The old Society, with its social tone and manners, had been entirely destroyed, and those who were taking its place were not so comfortable in their entirely changed circumstances as they had thought they would be. Therefore the ladies of the Court and the palace took lessons from Despréaux, who, in earlier decades, had been Marie-Antoinette's dancing-master.

Every morning the coquettes of the Empire took these lessons in manners and in dancing with the utmost enjoyment. They took less pleasure in writing letters. A few short notes were dictated to a secretary, and then it was time for the promenade, either on horseback or in a charming *calèche*, covered by an umbrella, or in an elegant cabriolet, in which ladies were able to display the charms of their new dresses and hats. Not until Madame returned from her morning drive or ride did she put herself in the hands of her *coiffeur*. He dressed her hair in the style of the latest pictures of famous actresses. Perhaps Mlle Mars, Mlle Grassini, Mlle George, or Mlle



THE MODEL

"*Les Femmes de Paris.*" Lithograph. Paris
About 1835

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Duchesnois had recently worn a new *coiffure* on the stage. It was commented upon and imitated by the *coiffeur*, who was now grown as important a person as he had been under the *ancien régime*.

In the evening the lady of the Empire put on a *toilette* consisting of a kind of jacket of silk velvet or plush, or perhaps a light tunic-like evening dress of white *crêpe de Chine*, and drove to the opera, to a theatre or concert, or to an evening party. Afterward supper would be awaiting her, either at home or at a friend's house, where the company gambled at small tables or danced until late in the night. Exhausted, she sank at last on to her white lace-trimmed pillows, with a dainty lace cap on her head, and on her hands, which had been rubbed with cream, kid gloves to preserve their whiteness.

A certain change took place in Josephine Bonaparte when she mounted a throne. The completely pleasure-seeking woman whom we saw in the Society of the Directory became an Empress who preferred to live in her own apartments, particularly at Malmaison, occupied with her toilet and her flowers. Even in the days of the Consulate Napoleon had confined her company more and more to her family, the Bonapartes and the Beauharnais. He had forbidden her to associate with her former friends of the Directory and particularly with the lovely Tallien. He did not approve of the frivolous tone which prevailed in Society, and as Consul, and still more when he was Emperor, he introduced stricter customs. Even the virtuous Mme Récamier had to suffer. She was not admitted to the Court, and had to give up her *salons*, at which she had received the most wealthy and distinguished company. For his wife the gay years were over. He invited to his Court a few ladies of the old aristocracy, who brought with them the customs of the *ancien régime*. Such were the Marquise de Montesson, Mme de Montesquieu, Mme de Genlis, Mme de Rémusat. All these ladies were delighted with Josephine's kindness and charm and with the way she adapted herself to

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the customs of her new surroundings. In spite of the dazzling splendour of the wonderfully dressed women and men, in spite of the immense luxury and the solemn pomp, Napoleon's Court was stiff and constrained. The licence which had reigned in the days of the Directory was gone. Josephine had to submit, and perhaps she did it not unwillingly. She no longer craved for theatres and balls, except those at the Tuileries, and she went to the opera only when she was compelled to go in the Emperor's company. But she made up for her husband's restraint by her elegance and extravagance at home and at the festivities arranged by the Court. The smallest party, the simplest ball, was an opportunity for her to order a new dress. Countess Kilmannsegge saw her once at Court in a wonderful white satin dress trimmed with hand-embroidered red velvet. The girdle, with long ends hanging down, was trimmed with massively set precious stones and clasped with a cameo. Her necklace and ear-rings were opals. She wore a toque, white and cherry-red, trimmed with golden pears, and with a long white ostrich feather drooping down behind. In the evening, especially, Josephine was extremely elegant, dressing with great taste and the utmost care, and even after her divorce, when she lived in retirement at Malmaison, she paid great attention to the most eclectic elegance. She usually wore even then the charming light white muslin dresses which Napoleon had so much liked to see her wearing. The material was so delicate and fine, says Mme Rémusat, that it might have been taken for a cloud. It was Indian silk muslin, which cost no less than 150 francs a yard! The border of such a dress was usually embroidered with gold and pearls. Neck and arms were bare, and the delicate material was only held at the shoulders by a cameo brooch, or a diamond buckle, or sometimes by a clasp reproducing a lion's head in gold. Sometimes it was a pale pink satin dress with sable fur trimmings with which her slender figure was becomingly draped. Josephine always had her hair dressed very simply in the Greek fashion,

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which suited her thin dark face to perfection. She either adorned her chestnut locks with flowers, with strings of pearls, or with *bandeaux* made of precious stones, a favourite fashion under the Empire, or she wore hats and toques of white satin with long white ostrich feathers.

Like most elegant ladies of the period, she attached great importance to making her *toilette* harmonize with the furnishings of her *salon* or boudoir. Thus she would wear a pastel-blue dress to go with yellow brocade chairs, or a grand Court dress of myrtle-green velvet in a *salon* whose walls were tapestried with red silk damask. But this very passion for strict harmony between dress and furniture exposed the ladies of the Empire to many a bitter disappointment. Their *toilettes* could obviously not be suited to the furnishings of every strange home visited, and Pauline Bonaparte had an unpleasant experience at her sister-in-law's palace at Saint-Cloud. After her marriage she paid a visit to her brother and Josephine, dressed in a marvellous green brocade robe embroidered all over with brilliants. What was her horror when she discovered that the *salon* of her sister-in-law was furnished entirely in a deep royal blue. For women of taste, like Pauline and Josephine Bonaparte, this combination was impossible. The visit was, therefore, very short, for Pauline was most unhappy at the thought that she was making a bad impression.

It may be imagined that the Empress's love of luxury and extravagance found imitators everywhere at Court, and that it was not only Napoleon's sisters who wished to emulate the sister-in-law they hated. Josephine's daughter, Hortense de Beauharnais, who later, as wife of Louis Bonaparte, became Queen of Holland, developed great taste, and was always very splendidly dressed, although she was much more economical and discreet than her mother. Nevertheless she spent a great deal of money, and was no less of a pleasure-seeker than Josephine. She had a particular love of acting, and showed so great a talent for this that the actor Fleury, who gave her

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lessons at Malmaison, once expressed his regret that she was not a girl of the people so that she might cultivate her talent. Hortense danced, too, with a grace which is usually found only in professional dancers. When she was Queen of Holland the quadrilles which she arranged in Paris were always a great event for the Court and the town. On one occasion she produced a ballet, with the help of six ladies and six gentlemen of her *entourage*, in which she excelled all the others in grace and skill. She danced with the lightness and simplicity of movement of a trained ballet-dancer, and with a perfection of art which amazed all the onlookers. She was dressed as the wife of an Inca, in white and silver gauze, with long sleeves caught up at several points with clasps of brilliants. Above the real silver border of the skirt were many rows of diamonds and a fringe of the same stones, and the yoke of the skirt, the belt, as well as the bodice, were covered with jewels. On her head she had a diadem of white cockatoo feathers, and in front of each feather a cluster of diamonds. The diadem was held together by five rows of immense brilliants. In her hand she held a tambourine of gold surrounded with precious stones of all colours.

The three sisters of the Emperor never appeared in the Tuileries except in full dress and adorned with all the diamonds they possessed. Their dresses alone, not counting all the jewels with which they were embroidered, cost at least 25,000 to 30,000 francs each. Caroline Murat, Napoleon's third sister, appeared one day at a ball given by her niece, Queen Hortense of Holland, wearing jewels worth forty million francs. Her dress of white tulle over white satin was bordered and trimmed with diamonds, where usually silk lace would have been used. On the sleeves and hem of the dress were strings of diamonds. The belt was made entirely of diamonds. The dress, which was slit on the left side, was held together with knots of diamonds. Her neck, ears, and hair gleamed with diamonds.

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Besides these extravagant princesses and queens, there were at the French Imperial Court other elegant women whose yearly expenditure on clothes and luxuries exceeded several hundred thousand francs. Among these may be mentioned, as particularly elegant and extravagant, the Duchess of Rovigo and the Duchess of Bassano, Mme Canisy, Princesse Talleyrand (Mme le Grand), the Duchesse d'Abrantès, and the Maids of Honour Duchâtel and Éléonore Dénuelle. They were all young and coquettish, and each one aspired to be the most beautiful. When they appeared at Court functions they were the centre of attraction.

Countess Kilmannsegge, who lived for a long time at the Imperial Court in Paris, cannot find enough to say about the luxury which the ladies of the Empire displayed on such occasions, and she was herself, with the Duchess of Kurland, one of the most elegant visitors at the Court. In February 1812 she was present at the quadrille of the Queen of Naples in the Tuileries, and she says :

The Duchess of Kurland, Comtesse Périgord, and myself went together to the festivity, the Duchess of Kurland in a transparent white tulle dress over white satin trimmed with a garland of white tulips made of satin and silver tulle. In her hair were bunches of mignonette with diamonds and ears of corn. Mme de Périgord wore a dress made entirely of silver embroidered with blue cornflowers and girdled with a garland of cornflowers. In her hair and around her neck were strings of diamonds mingled with sapphires.

Two thousand splendidly attired guests filled the theatre in the Tuileries. The dancers in the quadrille were Pauline Bonaparte, Caroline Murat (Queen of Naples), and a number of maids of honour. The quadrille was a sort of 'revue,' and portrayed Rome re-created by France.

Mme le Grand appeared as Iris, in a white and blue dress, a coloured scarf in her hand, and wearing a necklace of coloured stones. She danced *solo*, simply and gracefully, the famous scarf

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dance, which the English beauty Lady Hamilton had brought into fashion. Her lovely fair hair increased her beauty. Then there appeared six nymphs, who looked more beautiful than any of the others. They wore dresses of white Indian muslin, embroidered all round with gold reeds; short tunics with gold embroidery, wreaths of reeds on their heads, diamonds and pearls in their hair. These ladies were: Mme de Dalberg, Mme de Brignolle, Mme Augereau, Mme Duchâtel, and two others. After their dance Mme Rome appeared, portrayed by the Princess Pauline, who, although she was adorned with jewels, shone by her beauty alone. Her helmet, her dress, her sandals—all gleamed with diamonds; but by her open helmet and her tragic gestures one saw that she was expecting help. Mme Julie de Noailles, in a pistachio-green robe, appeared as the nymph Egeria, and showed to Rome in a mirror the happy fate of the future. Egeria danced modestly. She was followed by the Queen of Naples, Caroline Murat, portraying the greatness and dignity of France. Her helmet was shut, and covered with diamonds and many-coloured gems. The garnets and chrysoprases were the size of five-franc pieces. Her lappets were of silver sewn with diamonds; her shield was of pure gold set with diamonds and turquoises, her cloak of red velvet with golden pears, her under-dress of white satin. . . .

After the quadrille, or revue, was at an end the ball began, for which all these lovely dancers changed into other brilliant costumes.

Apart from the Court great luxury prevailed, particularly as regards jewellery, in other degrees of Society. Many ladies were almost overladen with brilliants. In the balls and parties which took place in the private houses of the senators and marshals of the Empire the brilliant and fantastic uniforms of the officers blended with the dresses of the ladies, embroidered all over with pearls and brilliants, to create a picture reminiscent of the stories of fabulous wealth in *The Arabian Nights*. Never have women seen their beauty and elegance in a more gorgeous frame. But this feminine luxury devoured immense sums of money. An elegant lady of the Empire expended on her personal needs about 200,000 francs a year. A budget



MORNING TOILET

Lithograph by A. Devéria. About 1835

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compiled by a husband of the period is not without humour. According to this, the needs of a woman of the world were roughly as follows :

	FRS.
365 hoods, caps, and hats	10,000
2 cashmere shawls	1,200
52 pairs of shoes	600
250 pairs of white stockings and the same number of coloured	3,000
600 dresses	25,000
12 chemises	300
Rouge and powder	300
2 veils	4,800
Rubber corsets, wigs, reticules, sunshades, fans, etc. .	6,000
Essences, perfumes, and other drugs for producing youth and beauty	1,200
Jewels and other trifles	10,000
Greek, Roman, Etruscan, Turkish, Arabian, Chinese, Persian, Egyptian, English, and Gothic furniture .	50,000
6 riding horses and 2 carriage horses	10,000
French, English, Spanish carriages	25,000
Dancing masters	5,000
French teachers	300
A bed	20,000
Advertisements, boxes at the theatre, concerts, etc. .	30,000
Charities and alms	100
Total	202,800

The ladies of the Empire, like their sisters of all ages, preferred coquetry to comfort, and were quite willing to freeze if they might be in the fashion. They went out in their light muslin and cotton dresses with bare arms and *décolleté* bodices, and with their thin shoes of coloured satin. The most delicate among them might perhaps throw on a light silk cloak trimmed with swansdown or a thin muslin veil over the shoulders ; they might even put on a small fur cape, named, after the Countess Palatine, a 'palatine.' In winter they carried muffs, but these were no longer of the immense dimensions of those carried by the *merveilleuses* of the Directory, and the vitchoura, a fur-trimmed overcoat, did not come into

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fashion until a later date. The bodices of dresses were quite low and the breasts almost completely exposed, and pushed up so high that the high bosom looked almost deformed. The ladies of the Empire laid great stress on the beauty of their necks, and, therefore, great pains were expended on the cut of gowns at back and front. Under the Consulate, as well as under the Empire, rouging and powdering were done very discreetly in good society, the Empress Josephine understanding this art particularly well. She used many cosmetics, but so delicately that they were hardly visible, and even Napoleon, who, like a good citizen, shared his wife's bedroom, never saw her use these artifices of the toilet. It was considered good taste to have very pale cheeks with only a suspicion of rouge, the eyebrows being very faintly marked with a pencil. The hair was no longer dressed by the *coiffeur* in regular curls and ringlets, but as naturally as possible, almost untidily, as may be seen in the charming picture of Josephine by Isabey, as though a light breeze had blown through the hair and disordered it. *Coiffures à la Titus* appeared again, but the forehead was more thickly adorned with curls. *Bandeaux* of thin tiger-skin, such as Pauline Borghese sometimes wore, or fillets of velvet, such as Mme Récamier used to bind her brown curls, or, on festive occasions, diadems of brilliants and other precious stones, or silver and gold bands, were very popular among the coquettes of the Empire.

Their delicate dresses were decked with garlands of flowers, blue roses, pink and white, oleanders and carnations in all colours and shades. The body was always completely covered by the long, soft, gathered dress, except for the neck, breast, and arms. After 1806 particularly the elegant ladies of the Empire were seized with a real passion for jewellery, for, as we have seen, the wealthy Court of Napoleon set them the example. According to Uzanne :

They decked themselves to such a degree with jewellery that the women looked like walking jewellers' shops. On every finger

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several diamond rings glittered one above the other. Golden chains were wound around the neck as many as eight times. Their ears were pulled down by heavy, massive pendants, their arms surrounded with chased bracelets of wonderful workmanship. Pearl collars and pearl fringes adorned the hair, and often fell down to the shoulders. Long gold pins sometimes held the hair together, and the gold hair-combs set with diamonds and pearls represented fortunes.

When General Arrighi, Duke of Padua, married, his bride, Mlle de Montesquieu, received as a gift from Napoleon a necklet of large diamonds worth 50,000 francs, and from Mme Letizia Bonaparte a costly ornament of emeralds and diamonds.

The extravagance in jewellery reached such a pitch that a reaction set in. Eventually it was only the *nouveaux riches* who wore jewellery, while ladies of taste about the year 1810 were extremely simple in their adornment, and wore their diamonds with the utmost modesty. They began to understand that elegance is not synonymous with display, and that youth and beauty are shown to much greater advantage if a woman is not overladen with jewels.

CHAPTER X

ROMANTICS AND PRUDES

AFTER the extreme freedom of manners at the end of the eighteenth century, after the enforced propriety, at least in public life, of the Empire period, there followed in all countries, about the year 1818 or a little earlier, a sudden wave of prudery, not only in ideas and opinions, but in dress and manners as well. It became an accepted canon of good taste to attract as little attention as possible. Correctness, a sober life, courtesy of manner and decency of behaviour, a somewhat stiff and formal dignity, quietness in dress and economy in the use of ornaments—these became the essential principles of elegance and refinement. The ostentatious wealth and the false decorum of the Empire gave place to a great simplicity; and in bringing this revolution about women played the chief part. The swashbuckling soldiers of an earlier age made way for men of intellect and talent, and of these woman, with her infinite adaptability, became the ardent and sincere disciple. The literary *salon* was revived, where the dignitaries of the intellectual world moved amid an adoring throng. There was a fashion for lectures on the most serious philosophical and scientific subjects. Poets were worshipped, and there was a tremendous outpouring of amateur verse. Passion, which before had been brutal and animal, became romantic and poetical, and many women of the literary world experienced in their own lives the romances which they wrote themselves or which were written by their friends and husbands. Rahel Varnhagen, Henrietta Herz, Bettina von Arnim, Luise Brachmann, Dorothea Veit—none of these romantics escaped a

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dangerous mixture of sensuality, idealistic enthusiasm, and unbridled passion. In France Lamartine was the spoiled favourite of women. He published his famous *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* in 1830; and the period as a whole was rich in literary output of the highest quality. Stendhal wrote his *Le Rouge et le noir*, Balzac his *Scènes de la vie privée* and *Physiologie du mariage*; Théophile Gautier published his *Poésies*; Victor Hugo's *Hernani* appeared in the theatre. Literature and music were favourite themes of conversation in every *salon*. No respectable household was complete without at least one musical instrument, and no social gathering lacked some kind of musical performance. Nearly every woman played the harp or the pianoforte or sang, not always, one cannot but imagine, to the unalloyed pleasure of the company. Poets and musicians were alike entering an age of unexampled notoriety and success.

In the *salon* games of forfeits relieved the strain of too much intellectual conversation; charades alternated with a quadrille, a gavotte, a schottische, a polka, or a waltz. The first dance programmes were used in the year 1817, as described by Rague-neau in his *Chronique indiscrete*. At first they had little success, but gradually the custom became usual, especially at public balls, and it spread to all countries, particularly to Germany, where it remained in fashion right into the twentieth century. But people danced less well and less frequently than in the eighteenth century and during the 'dance wave' of the early nineteenth, and with many of the men whist proved a formidable counter-attraction to the ballroom.

Women's ball dresses were characterized by a new simplicity. Diamonds and gaudy ornaments had disappeared from dresses and hair, their place being taken by unpretentious garnets, by simple pearls, or by a massive gold ornament or curiously worked brooch.

The main attraction of the elegant woman, however, was her *coiffure*, particularly her hat. There had never been such

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variety of hats, even among Englishwomen, who had for a long time owned the most beautiful hats in the world. From 1815 to 1830 in France alone there were more than 10,000 different hat forms and styles, including hoods and caps; and the Romantic coquette gave almost her whole attention to devising a becoming frame for the face. All the fashion journals of the period devote much more attention and care to hats than to dresses and coats. There were hats of Florentine straw, caps of silk plush, velvet *bérets* with plumes of feathers, hats of *gros de Naples* or *crêpe bouillonné*, caps of cotton, turbans of muslin, *toques à la Polonaise*, caps *à l'Autrichienne*, Moabite turbans, morning hoods, and *cornettes* of white cotton trimmed with a quantity of delicate lace or of black velvet trimmed with tulle. And *what* hats! What width! What height! Harken to a witty observer of the period:

They remind one of the fantastic infantry shakos of the great army, except that on those towering head-pieces equally high plumes were superimposed. Or, again, imagine the Gargantuan cream tarts described by Rabelais, and you have a vague idea of the massive head-coverings of the Romantic beauties, which were loaded with ribbons, flowers, cockades, fringes, tufts, bows, *ruches*, feathers, and *aigrettes*. They are hats for amazons; helmets, which cover the head, face, and neck; fearful, spiked helmets, terrible monstrosities. It is difficult to imagine that such bizarre masterpieces could ever have sheltered the smiling, gentle faces of our women.

And if one looks at the fashion illustrations of the period one has to agree with this criticism.

Bodices became higher and skirts fuller again. Petticoats reappeared, and even drawers, which the coquettes allowed to be seen below the rather short skirts. In England these were recommended on hygienic grounds, and what had been scorned a few years previously was now considered elegant and smart. By the heightening of the bodice, which was tightly laced, the ladies of 1830 developed an extraordinary breadth across the



THE DAUGHTER OF THE PAINTER

*Oil-painting by J. K. Stieler
About 1840*

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shoulders. Puffed sleeves became the fashion, under the names 'leg-of-mutton' or 'ham' sleeves.

In evening dress the shoulders were quite bare. It was considered the greatest charm at this period to possess a slender neck and sloping shoulders, and all ladies took a great deal of trouble to develop these charms to the limit of possibility. The corset, which in the eighteenth century was made in very primitive fashion, and which under the Directory and the Empire disappeared altogether, came into favour again. Women laced so tightly that their bodies were almost divided in two.

Corsets, made of the finest whalebone, were now real works of art. They were no longer made only of coarse, common material, but of cambric and silk, and only the cheaper sorts were made of twill. A well-made corset cost, even in those days, from four to five pounds, and the most expensive had elastic sides which expanded or contracted with the movements of the body. In 1830 the corset for the first time took its place as a symbol of gallantry, a place which it held until well into the twentieth century, some painters, such as Rops, seeing in it a kind of erotic fetish. As an addition to these corsets, a small cushion of pink or white satin was worn. It was fastened to the corset at the back to give the figure more roundness, and was very similar to the *cul de Paris* of the eighties of the previous century. Writers such as Fuchs see in this fashion a symptom of the shamefaced lasciviousness of the *Biedermeier* period, and think that the same tendency can be detected in the practice of wearing a great number of skirts in order to exaggerate the fullness of the hips.

The artificial broadening of the hips and shoulders was a complete reaction from the slender lines of the Empire period. The bodice was very *décolleté*, but a wrap or a wide shawl, often edged with fur, enveloped modestly the nudity of the shoulders, and lent them an added attraction. These articles of clothing, shawls and wraps, were never absent from the

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wardrobe of the lady of that period, which in Germany was known as the *Biedermeier*, and which has been depicted for posterity in the drawings of Schwind, Richter, and Spitzweg. Sweet femininity, charm, and grace were the accepted vogue, but there was also much false modesty and sentimentality. The lady of the *Biedermeier* period thought the natural synonymous with the immoral; the very thought of her sex embarrassed her. To undress herself, or to be seen entirely naked, in a bath, in front of another woman, was considered terribly immodest. At German seaside resorts the bathing places of men and women were purposely placed as far away from each other as possible, and a strict beach inspector kept a sharp look-out that the gentlemen walking on the shore did not come too near to the swimming and bathing ladies. They came, however, as near as they could, and endeavoured, with the aid of field-glasses, to bring at least a glimpse of feminine charm within range of their eyes.

A bathing dress was a much more modest affair than an evening dress. It covered the whole body from the neck to the middle of the calf. Some women even wore stockings in the water. "The confusion of nakedness with immorality," says Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm in his *Sittengeschichte des Bades*, "produced that feeling of injured modesty which in the nineteenth century retarded for so long the old pleasures of bathing." "Once every week we should renew our baptismal covenant, that is to say, bathe," advised Weber, the laughing philosopher of the chastely modest *Biedermeier* period. The men and women of the thirties did not yet understand that air, sun, and water are essential elements in the cultivation of physical beauty.

In the winter the pampered darlings of the epoch carried gigantic muffs of fox, chinchilla, and other costly furs. Fur boas and feather boas were wound several times round the neck. Less costly beaver cloaks and wraps, and cloaks trimmed with swansdown (the so-called palatines), were worn in the

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street and for sledging parties. These last were, as they had been in the time of Marie-Antoinette, very popular among the women of the 1830's. It was possible to flirt so safely in sledges, acting as they did as a many-bastioned rampart against the stormy approaches of the predatory sex. This suited the women of the period very well, for they were much concerned with the appearance of correct behaviour. It seems strange to us that a respectable woman could not be seen publicly on the ice in skates. In Berlin, in the season, the most elegant dandies of the Court and of high society had a passion for skating. But their ladies either looked on or were pushed gaily over the ice in sledge-chairs. For a lady while skating might have fallen, and that would have been very shocking to the *bourgeois* morality of the day. Ladies might go riding, but not skating. That was still an exclusively masculine sport.

A new society had come into being, and with it a new type of woman, a type which flourished among the *Biedermeier* of Germany as well as in Romantic France. Its main characteristic was a charmingly poetic but rather artificial melancholy and sentimentality. Even the most unsentimental French women were not quite free from it. Véron, in his *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, says of the women of this period :

Intelligent women with a certain amount of beauty, a certain aristocratic background, a new elegance and simplicity, in which, however, one could not put too much faith, adorned all the *salons* . . . where politicians, intellectuals, and literary men predominated. One would need to resuscitate all the different classes of society and their different points of view in order to do justice to the distinguished women who ruled this new world, and vied with one another in charm, wit, and ambition. . . .

In France it was women like the delightful Marquise de Castries, a gentle young beauty with light gold hair, who created the greatest sensation wherever she went. "Those who had not seen her dancing at the balls of the Duchesse de

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Berry," continues Véron, "could certainly form no idea of the new ethereal type of woman who was admired at that period." The *Journal des dames et des modes* published, as early as the year 1820, an article about the current ideal of an elegant woman. She was to have lovely fair hair dressed high in plaits or parted, and a dainty cashmere shawl thrown lightly round the delicate, sloping, and dazzlingly white shoulders. Her eyes must shine with the liveliest, most penetrating fire, or else reveal in their hidden depths a yearning and melancholy distraction. She must be slender and light-footed, her figure pliant and graceful. When she sits at the harp or the piano-forte and sings she must sway with a coquetry which throws all the men into ecstasies. The ideal, in short, was Sappho or the Corinne of Mme de Staël. She must lead a life of perfect balance and harmony. In the morning after breakfast she receives her dressmakers and the vendors of flowers and lace. Dozens of garlands of every kind of artificial flower are unpacked from the bandboxes, and are thrown over the harp, the piano, the chairs, the tables, and the richly carpeted floor. Every dress is almost covered in flowers, and gives out a scent of sweet perfumes, of lavender and lilac. The hats and caps are tried on, one after another, in front of the mirror; costly real lace is selected for a delicate *négligé*, for a night-dress, or for underwear. Collars and *fichus* are tried on, and then perhaps, after long consideration, discarded. Everything is sent back! The spoiled creature stretches herself out, disappointed, on her sofa and reads. But, no! She does not read. She is distracted, nervous, and has a headache from all the trying on. She must recover her calm. She seats herself at her embroidery frame; she embroiders on a gossamer-like muslin cloth, in one corner garlands of roses and myrtle, in another Cupid with his arrow—*motifs* culled from the current number of the *Almanac des dames*. When she is tired of embroidering she orders her carriage, and, stepping into the *calèche*, lifts her short wide skirt so high that a dainty little



ACTRESS AND HAIRDRESSER

Lithograph by E. de Beaumont. Paris. 1845-50

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foot and a delicate well-formed leg are visible up to the knee and its elegant garter.

According to Mme Foa, the collaborator in the *Livre de cent et un*, the elegant lady of the Romantic period, in order to count as a lady of fashion, had to be rather more than twenty and less than thirty years of age, and to have girlish charms.

The lady of fashion is always dressed with great elegance combined with simplicity. No diamonds or other jewels—the careful woman saves these for the time when the reign of her youth and beauty is over. The lady of fashion has no regular, famous dress-maker. She invents her own models and the cut of her clothes, or, at most, is advised by others. Once, and only once, a year she has a dress made by one of the famous fashion artists.

But the great dressmakers repeat themselves, and it is so annoying to see at a ball dresses which resemble one another to a hair. . . . What a position for a woman of taste! The lady of fashion goes to a ball. As soon as she steps out of her carriage she is engaged to dance by the dandies who have been awaiting her arrival: on the stairs, on the landing, everywhere she is invited to dance. Yesterday, the day before yesterday, at the last ball indeed, she has promised herself in advance for the party of to-day, so that, when at last she enters the ball-room, she has given away many more waltzes than will be danced during the whole evening. She is admired and wooed on every side. She can hardly move: she is besieged with questions and declarations of love which she hardly has time to answer. But she does not remain long at a party. She appears like a meteor, sheds a blinding light, and disappears. And she repeats this a number of times every evening at different parties; but she is careful to return home very early, for she values her youthful freshness, and guards against spoiling her beauty too soon by dancing late. Before dancing and fatigue have dimmed the brilliance of her eyes, before her charming *coiffure* has become disordered, before her *toilette* is

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rumpled, she returns to her dressing-room, to prepare herself carefully for the night. Then she falls asleep, with the satisfying thought that her evening has been well filled and has passed harmoniously. It will be said of her: "She was only there a moment! She has so many social engagements! It is hardly possible to see her face to face. But she was never before so beautiful as she was to-day!"

The lady of 1830 rises late, passes the morning in her boudoir, where she either paints, plays an instrument, or sings, looks after her children, if she has any, or does her housekeeping. For the elegant ladies of the early nineteenth century did all these things themselves, and enjoyed doing them. About four o'clock in the afternoon she gets into her carriage and goes out driving. In Paris her objective is the Bois de Boulogne, in London Hyde Park, in Berlin the Zoological Gardens. Sometimes her servant is waiting for her with a saddled horse. Seven or eight cavaliers, her dancing partners of yesterday, accompany her. In bad weather Madame pays calls and does her shopping. In the evening she visits the opera or the play, or goes to a ball or dinner. So the social round proceeds until the spring, when the lady who considers herself, her reputation, and her beauty leaves the town and goes to the country or to the sea. In the autumn she returns fresher, stronger, and more beautiful than ever, new-armed for the exertions of the winter.

The only sport practised by woman in Germany and France was riding. In England she had more liberty, and was even allowed to skate like a man, but on the Continent the only exercise allowed was on horseback. The fashion for riding spread widely among women between the years 1830 and 1835. They were anxious to follow the example of English horsewomen, and in every city in Europe elegant Amazons were to be seen in public places. But etiquette demanded that every lady should have at least two or three cavaliers with her, while a groom rode a few hundred yards behind. The long riding

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habit was of coloured cloth with a white cambric vest. Around the neck was worn a white cambric collar with a square cravat, or perhaps a bow of the same colour as the habit. Strapped riding breeches, small top boots, chamois-leather gloves, a riding whip of rhinoceros leather or a dainty cane completed the riding costume. With this costume horsewomen wore very unpractical hats adorned with peacocks' and pheasants' feathers. Only the very dashing wore a cap, or perhaps a felt hat, which gave them a boyish appearance very rare in those days.

The ladies of 1830 were younger, fresher, more gracious and charming than the ladies of the Empire, and, although perhaps less beautiful, possessed a greater girlish charm. They were mild, docile, more tender than passionate—at any rate to all outward appearances—and they seemed to have given up the wild, unbridled sensuality of the previous century, when no lover, no husband, could be sure of his beloved. They knew what was proper, what was decorous, and if they did not altogether eschew forbidden fruit, at least they avoided any scandal or notoriety. Certainly nearly every woman had a lover, but she made a show of being very virtuous,¹ and unburdened her sinful heart in the confessional. Such are the women of Balzac. They are infinitely womanly, but have something of the mettle of fine horses—thoroughbreds. As the Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud says in *Le Père Goriot*:

She had beautiful hands, small, slender feet, lively movements. It was not without cause that the Marquis Ronquerolles called her a thoroughbred. Her nervous delicacy did not detract from her other charms. She had lovely curves, without any tendency to plumpness. Thoroughbred! A woman of breeding!

In their white, dainty clothes, with their airs of innocence and sentimental glances, these thoroughbreds seemed like creatures from another, more ethereal, sphere.

¹ The translator wishes to dissociate himself from so severe a judgment of the early Victorians.

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Even the ladies of the theatre, who, up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, were regarded almost as pariahs by society, and in part, indeed, were so, clothed themselves with a cloak of virtue and modesty. The delightful Henrietta Sontag was besieged by admirers, young dandies and old men of the world, but she held them all in check with her innocence and virtue. Neither princes nor dukes enjoyed her favours. She might grant them occasional small endearments, a chaste kiss or two, but no one could have her as a mistress, however much many of her admirers might desire it. Count Pückler, who said of her, "C'est le plus joli petit genre," and that she would make the most delightful mistress, hoped in vain for so good a fortune. In the year 1828 he saw her again in high aristocratic circles in London, where she had won her triumphs, not only by her marvellous voice, but also by her natural grace and the charm of her gay, naïve temperament. Pückler had the good fortune to drive her home one night in May in a closed carriage, but, except for a few kisses and endearments, the lovely artist accorded him not the slightest favour. He wrote to a friend of this romantic episode:

Until dark we rode and walked, saw lovely landscapes and then the sights of Greenwich. We had our meals by artificial light and sunlight together, looking down on the water from an open window, and not until twelve o'clock did we drive home in a completely closed carriage! You know my habit never to miss such opportunities, though with her, above all, I should be afraid of being thought ill-mannered. At first she was shy, even angry—but at last she gave way a little, and before we reached home, although nothing improper had occurred, there had been an exchange of as much as delicacy would allow. *Te voilà satisfait maintenant*, for, at any rate, vanity is satisfied, you will say; but I cannot wish to go any further even if it were possible—it would be wrong on the one hand and unwise on the other, for if continued it would needs hinder me in the pursuit of my plans! But this I must say: I have never met a more charming creature, a sweeter nature, and quite different from what I expected.



IN THE BATH
"Les Madeleines." Lithograph by Cham. Paris
About 1850

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Count Pückler pursued many other lovely ladies of the theatre, and loaded them with gifts, but from others as well as from Henrietta Sontag he had to endure refusals and even reprimands. The actresses and singers of the *Biedermeier* period were *bourgeois* in their ideas, and on the whole eschewed all gallant adventures. Sabina Heinefetter, whose "black Oriental eyes" and "heroically perfect acting and glorious singing" so much entranced Count Pückler that he sent costly jewels to her box, with the request that she should grant him a rendezvous and become his friend, answered him in a tone of gentle refusal, but quite firmly :

For such love and friendship as you propose you should choose some one less particular. I owe it to myself and to you to express myself quite frankly. Do you imagine that you are the first to make me such a brilliant and friendly proposal? If my heart has sometimes been foolish enough not to be quite indifferent to men such as you, my reason has always reminded me in good time of the base purpose to which lead the love and friendship even of distinguished men who have been spoiled by fortune and society.

Yet the lovely Sabina had certainly not been watched over and guarded from the dangers of life by a careful mother's hands. She came from very poor surroundings, and had even as a small girl earned her living by playing the harp in inns and public houses. Nevertheless she remained virtuous.

One could enumerate a number of other virtuous actresses of the *Biedermeier* period. Augusta Crelinger and Frau Devrient, the wife of Ludwig Devrient, were certainly very beautiful and elegant women; but they were housekeepers and good mothers by nature, and had no ambition to unite the life of a *hetæra* with their theatrical career, a course which was almost inevitable on the eighteenth-century stage. Even the singer Caroline Bauer, whose life was by no means free from love affairs, felt obliged, in her memoirs, to insist upon her virtue. Her adventure with the greatest of the Berlin Don

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Juans of that period, Prince August of Prussia, a brother of Prince Ludwig Ferdinand, was the main topic of conversation in Berlin in the year 1825. Caroline Bauer was not only indignant at the persistence and cynicism with which the Prince sought to win her, but she openly criticized most severely his numerous other love affairs, which were publicly recognized, even by King Frederick William III. When Prince August saw the pretty girl for the first time, at a theatrical performance in the palace, his senses were immediately inflamed. "He came," to use the words of Caroline's own description, "with his faun-like smile," to the actresses who were present, "like a pasha conscious of victory, examining his slaves and wondering to which one he shall throw his handkerchief!" From among all the artists he elected to speak to her, and his words were such, his dark eyes gazed so greedily at her lovely figure, that Fräulein Bauer blushed. As a sportsman praises a horse, so he extolled all the details of her body. During the next few days she received the most costly flowers, and finally he thought he would be able to conquer her with jewels. He was the richest prince at the Prussian Court, and had "hundreds of mistresses," among whom the recognized sultanas were the two beauties—Mlle Wichmann, afterward Countess Waldenburg, and the charming Jewess Arens, who was raised to the nobility as Frau von Prillwitz. Caroline Bauer was evidently intended to be chosen as the third in rank of the ladies of the harem. As she would not consent of her own free will to the Prince's wooing, he followed the example of the French dukes of the Rococo period. He resorted to cunning and force, but he forgot that he no longer lived in a period when women expected and accepted such adventures. Caroline was the German equivalent of an early Victorian, and her standard of morality was *bourgeois*!

Prince August had taken into his confidence a former mistress, Mme Krakau, and the plan proposed was that she should get the young singer, on some pretext, to go with her to her

house. When Caroline had been sitting for some little time with the unscrupulous lady the door opened suddenly, and Prince August approached once more, "with a confident, faun-like smile." Caroline continues, in her memoirs:

At the same time I heard the door through which I had entered the room from the hall softly locked from outside. Another two steps and Prince Don Juan was holding me in his arms. Then I, who am usually so easily intimidated, felt myself possessed by courage—the courage of great fear. With a loud cry for help I sprang up, threw the black piano-stool in front of the Prince, rushed to the window, tore down the pots of lovely white flowers, threw up the sash, and jumped screaming into the street . . . before my dazed pursuer could even catch me by my dress. . . . In a high state of excitement, without hat, without shawl, and followed by a questioning, shouting crowd of neighbours and passers-by, I hurried in flying haste and almost beside myself from the Neue Wilhelmstrasse toward the Linden.

There, by good fortune, she ran into the arms of a friend, who took her home. The episode had a sequel. Mme Krakau was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for match-making by violence, and the wild Prince August was obliged, by command of the King, to leave Berlin for a time.

There were, of course, even in the *Biedermeier* period, and in Berlin, ladies of the theatre who were just as lax in their morals as their fellow-artists in France in the eighteenth century. The *Chronique scandaleuse* has many stories to relate of the nightly carousals of the extravagant, elegant, and beautiful Henriette Baranius, not only at the end of the eighteenth century, but also in the first two decades of the nineteenth. She scandalized the whole of Berlin by the blatancy of her conduct and by her ostentatious splendour. Eventually she was banished from the town and from the Berlin stage, but she soon returned and renewed her life of extravagance. A little later, between about 1833 and 1843, Charlotte von Hagen made a great stir both as a beauty and as an actress—one of the most brilliant on the German stage. She too was no prude,

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and always had a large circle of admirers, for she was the very embodiment of the ideals of the period. Alexander, Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, describes her enthusiastically in his memoirs in the following words :

This artist had the most perfectly beautiful body I have ever seen. Everything about her was symmetrical and graceful. The set of her head, the proportions of her shoulders, neck, and arms were marvellous models for a sculptor, and even antique art could not have produced anything more beautiful. . . . Added to these charms, picture her dressed with perfect taste, a 'not too much' of adornment, a coquettish simplicity, a real flair for the arrangement of silks and lace, pearls and bracelets, and you will agree with me that this artist was an ornament of the stage.

She was equally attractive in private life, and knew how to enhance her remarkable beauty by the intelligence of her conversation and by her wit. A. W. von Schlegel, Gutzkow, and many other intellectuals of her day were enchanted by her piquant ways and her unusual amiability.

"The reaction, or, one might prefer to say, the end of the hobbledehoy years of the *bourgeois* age," says Fuchs,

began first in England, in the period between 1820 and 1830. This reaction was so complete in England that at first sight one might imagine that a completely new age had begun, so entirely different is the general physiognomy of people and things from now on as compared with the epoch just closed. In reality only so much was changed as was absolutely necessitated by the new costume. And it was merely a new tail-coat which had been donned : the coat of respectability of the solid *bourgeois*, which henceforth every one had to wear in public if he wished to be counted a member of decent society. In France and Germany the change, when it took place, was not nearly so noticeable, although it was equally drastic, because there the men of the rising classes had never completely thrown off their Philistine coats, so that they only needed to adopt a serious and 'sedate' air in order at once to become worthy exponents of the new conditions of life. . . . 'Preservation of outward appearances' became the rule of *bourgeois* society, a rule to which every one had to conform.



A LADY OF THE SECOND EMPIRE
Water-colour by C. Guys. About 1855

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Something at least was gained: society was less frankly sensual, less pagan in its tastes and passions, than it had been at the close of the eighteenth century.

A 'high-brow' atmosphere was created, and every one strove to take at least an apparent interest in intellectual questions. The problems of literature and science were debated, not only in the schools, but in the *salons* of high society. The great intellectuals commanded the applause of the world and the unswerving loyalty of their wives and friends, a loyalty pushed to extreme limits of devotion and sacrifice. Charlotte Stieglitz, wife of the poet, is a tragic figure. Scherr¹ says:

She gave herself up to death on the night of December 29-30, 1834, in Berlin, with a calmness and composure, with an unequalled and modest dignity, in the full flower of her youth and beauty, in order, through horror at so terrible a sacrifice, to release the poetic genius of the husband in whom she believed.

But the finest intellect of this period was probably possessed by Rahel Levin, afterward the wife of Varnhagen von Ense. She had a genius for the finer shades of social intercourse, and, according to the evidence of one of her contemporaries of 1830, she was, without being beautiful or elegant,

always the same lively, delightful creature, animated and stimulating, straightforward, serene, friendly, and everywhere practised her inherent talent for the noblest kind of friendship, not forward, but at the same time not retiring, making her presence felt to exactly the right degree, with goodwill and lively intelligence. In her own home the unquestioned duty of caring for all the members of her household only enhanced her beneficent zeal and gave it scope even in insignificant things; whereas among strangers she was more reticent, so long as there was nothing to call forth her sympathy, and when that was needed she gave it freely, either to general or to particular sorrow, and when the occasion offered would devote, with a noble passion and with disinterested courage, the whole power of her intellect to aiding all who needed her help. She loved to fight against wrongs, to

¹ *Kulturgeschichte der deutschen Frau* (3 vols., from the materials of Johannes Scherr). Edited by Max Bauer and published by the Aretz Verlag, Dresden.

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rectify injustices, and to reveal arrogant stupidity in its true light by the simple truth of her own nature. She was much more than merely the perfect hostess for whom, as a rule, a cultivated, delicate, well-meaning, negative attitude is sufficient; she ruled society, and never tired, with courageous determination, of imposing on it goodness and modesty and relentlessly chastising it for wrongdoing.

All women were not so perfect. The wife of Clemens Brentano, a niece of the highly respected banker Bethmann, of Frankfort, a few days after her marriage threw her wedding-ring out of the window, and, to her husband's horror,

galloped through the streets of Cassel in the most amazing costume, her red horse-cloth flying in the breeze. The skill with which Frau Auguste, the wife of the poet, could play the drum with her feet on the bed-posts, the rattle of which would be regularly followed by a *pizzicato* executed with her toe-nails, became at last so unbearable to her husband that he grew distracted and ran away.

Such women may have been exceptions who trod under foot the "blue flower" of the Romantics. But other gifted women of this period, who had the reputation of possessing the "soul of an elf," of being perpetual children, babbling whatever happened to come into their heads, committed solecisms against the good tone of this *bourgeois* atmosphere. In the *salons* of distinguished Berlin society Bettina von Arnim threw her leg without embarrassment over the chair, so that her petticoats, with their multitude of frills, and her legs also, could be plainly seen. For, in spite of the masculinity which she possessed, this woman, the most eccentric of all the German Romantics, had a considerable endowment of coquetry and real feminine desire to please. Above all, it delighted her to mock at the affected manners and the pretended prudery of the *bourgeoisie*, particularly at the tea-parties, which had lately come into fashion. On one occasion she was the first to arrive at one of these parties, and hid behind a screen. Little by little the friends arrived, and they began to talk about

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the absent Bettina. Suddenly the maligned lady stepped forward, quite unembarrassed, and said: "Yes, I am a terrible person, but I will improve myself."

These tea-parties were particularly popular in Germany, and it became a regular passion among the ladies of good society to arrange them. They became as fashionable as the literary *salons*. The deceit and falseness of social life was particularly marked at these "æsthetic teas," and many wits of the period made great fun of them. The affected sociability of the prevailing mode is well illustrated in the following poem by the brother of Rahel Varnhagen:

A SOCIAL RECEPTION

Flowers and candles,
Feathers and laces,
Names with handles,
And snobbish faces,
Heart behind corsets,
And shoulders in shawl,
Each female bore sits
'Paying a call'!

Duly presented
Sons and spouses
Who've long frequented
Similar houses,
With meaningless stutter,
Or tones affected,
Painfully mutter—
What seems expected.
The hostess's daughter
Dispenses a stream
Of tea like water,
With sugar and cream,
Pastries and tarts,
And suchlike things,
Till the rumour starts
That So-and-so sings!

The *virtuosi*
Blunder and stumble
From high C to low C,
While waiters mumble.

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Teacups clatter,
And, undiminished,
The women's chatter—
Thank God!—that's finished!
The room grows hotter,
The air grows stronger,
And Time gets longer and longer and longer!

Even the houses of the *Biedermeier* period were not exempt from the same tediousness. They were furnished with a certain agreeable simplicity, but without any lightness or elegance. The general impression was unmistakably *bourgeois*, not only in Germany, which was impoverished, but also in France. Even the bedrooms and boudoirs of the Parisiennes, who have always paid great attention to these intimate rooms, lacked that warmth and seductive comfort with which they had been furnished in previous centuries. The bedroom was regarded as a sort of *salon*, a kind of reception-room from which everything intimate was banned. The furniture consisted, as a rule, of a chest of drawers, a writing-table, a work-basket, a large mirror—the so-called *psyche*—and a small settee near the bed. Not infrequently there was also a piano in the room. The bed stood discreetly in a niche or alcove, and was covered with white muslin or coloured curtains. Even the bedrooms of the worldly and elegant had none of the luxurious suggestiveness of the Louis XV period. Nothing suggested passionate hours of love: no soft, voluptuous pillows, no dainty, billowy cushions, as in the eighteenth century, enticed to amorous dalliance, even in the bedchamber of the coquette. Everything was cool, almost virginal. The settees, the armchairs with stiff backs, even the bed, seemed to ban from these feminine sanctuaries the very possibility of all tender compliance. Women simply dreamed there, wrapped in the blue mists of idealism. On the other hand, they had a larger quantity of knick-knacks than in any other period. Their work-tables and writing-tables were covered with them. The Berlin ladies in particular loved to surround themselves with necessary and



DRESSING
Coloured lithograph by P. Numa

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unnecessary *bibelots*. Hans Ostwald, in his *Berlinerin*, has compiled an admirable list of the objects necessary to the happiness of the pampered woman of the *Biedermeier* period :

Whist-cards, so small that they seem as though they were meant for dolls, in tiny, finely chased silver boxes, silver needle-cases in miniature, finely engraved and set with precious stones, contained in dainty leather cases, tiny houses of citron-wood with intarsia-work or silver fittings which open at the touch of a finger, six or seven doors hiding all sorts of perfumes in fine gilded bottles of cut glass, while a concealed musical box tinkles out a tune.

In the Berlin of those days, which, after the Napoleonic wars, was inhabited by less than 200,000 people, but the population of which was doubled in the decades before the revolution of 1848, there were a number of luxury shops in which gentlemen could buy rareties for their ladies: boxes, tie-pins, sweetmeat caskets, bottles, raincoats, travelling and bathing caps, purses, English saddle and riding equipment, Parisian shoes, elegant gold- and silver-ware, steel-ware, buckles, scissors, and many other objects and articles for the use of female elegance. All these trifles were made with delicate taste and a fine feeling for form. Greeting cards played an important part in social life, somewhat similar to the part played to-day by illustrated papers, for they often contained portraits and illustrations, and for those who collected them they had pleasant memories of friendship besides. Doubtless the fair recipients had leisure now and again to take the greeting cards from their little case and recall to their minds the pleasure and pain they had brought to them. There were cards that opened, to reveal the lover swearing eternal friendship; cards with cut-out paper flowers, symbolizing constancy and affection; heavenly landscapes in which little mirrors represented lakes; proverbs in frames of flowers; little houses with pairs of lovers; beauties hidden behind paper cobwebs; girls offering their lips to be kissed. Such

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were the inevitable subjects of greeting cards in Germany and valentines in England.

According to Moreck the lady of the *Biedermeier* period was obsessed by the duty of keeping up at least the appearance of extreme respectability. Her dress itself, which remained the basis of fashion for half a century, was founded on an avoidance of all the extravagances of conscious coquetry. In its form this dress had certain elements reminiscent of the *ancien régime*, but its spirit was very different. Its most attractive feature was the round Court *décolleté* which bared the shoulders and allowed the beauty of a delicately moulded neck-line, that entrancing curve of physical grace, to have its full effect, while the exquisite heart-shaped curve of the bodice displayed the charm of the breast rising and falling in the soft rhythm of breathing.

These beautiful, gentle-eyed women, these artistic and cultured ladies, these tender feminine beings, to whom even in riper years there still clings something shamefaced and modest, have one duty only—to be innocent and gracious. Love-locks and hair parted in the middle help to emphasize this type of virginal modesty. Even the plaits wound round the head, which many women preferred, gave the wearers something virtuous and austere. Men felt themselves uplifted by these ideal women. In a letter to his father in 1812 Theodor Körner wrote of his bride, Toni Adamberger, whom the cynical worldlings of the Vienna Congress called “Dragon of Virtue”:

I can admit it without blushing: without her I should have undoubtedly sunk in the whirlpool around me. You know me, my hot blood, my unimpaired strength, my wild fantasy; picture to yourself so unstable a temperament in this garden of blossoming pleasure and intoxicating joy, and you will understand that only my love for this angel has enabled me to step out boldly from the ranks and say: “Here is one who has kept his heart pure.”

CHAPTER XI

LOLA MONTEZ

AFTER the cultured, delicate, æsthetic women of the Romantic period a wild, unbridled creature like the mistress of Ludwig I of Bavaria seems doubly strange. Instinctive passion is once more naked before us, passion whose smile is seduction, whose glance poison; the incarnation of perversity, coming after a period when sweetness and grace were the accepted elements of the feminine ideal.

Once more times, manners, and fashions have changed, and woman has put off her simpering ways to assume masculine ambitions. All women, it is true, are not influenced by this masculine tendency, but a few push it to excess, and break all bounds of restraint. They even plunge into politics, relying on an irresistible feminine attraction to make their sway the more certain. The most typical of such women is Lola Montez. Her Southern, sensual beauty provoked and attracted men, like a light in darkness luring moths to destruction, and they found in her the incarnation of a new ideal, a new seduction clothing the eternal form of passion. The strange and the unknown exercise a fascination which men find it difficult to withstand in their relations with a woman, especially if she be an extremely temperamental stage artist.

Eyes as blue as vaults of heaven,
Sunlit as the summer air !
Like the plumage of the raven
Is thy soft and shining hair.

Form divine and every feature
Framed to set the heart awlirl,

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Like some wild and woodland creature
Is my Andalusian girl.

Proud, but not too proud for giving
All thy being in one kiss.
In the fire of passion living,
Finding in that fire thy bliss !

Fuller life, a larger fullness
Still demanding as thy right ;
From the daily round of dullness
Yearning upward to the light.

Ah ! the South is made for loving !
There is light, and there is heat.
Passion, like a mountain moving,
Streams in lava at thy feet.

Drink, my soul, the draught of pleasure,
While mine ears drink in the sound,
While the sweet and rapturous measure
Spreads enchantment all around.

Hear then ! and without repining
Bask in the Eternal Now,
Love and life like roses twining
As a garland for thy brow.

This lyric, which owes its composition more to passionate enthusiasm than to any real poetical gift, was inspired by Lola when the sixty-year-old Bavarian King Ludwig I made her his official favourite.

As Fuchs says in his *Ein vormärzliches Tanzidyll* :

It was certainly not the first time that a prince had been so captivated by a piquant daughter of Terpsichore as to be capable of the maddest escapades—escapades which only princely position and power could permit.

"The king's dancing-girl" is, on the contrary, a perpetual refrain in history. That Ludwig I of Bavaria, therefore, allowed his ageing senses to be reinflamed by the voluptuous beauty of a scheming dancer was, in itself, nothing remarkable. . . . His enthusiastic love for Lola Montez, the "light-footed Andalusian," would have been for the public a mere variation on an old theme. . . . In order that this idyllic love-dance should be transformed into an event of historical importance something



LOLA MONTEZ, COUNTESS OF LANDSFELD

Engraving by L.-H. Garnier

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else was needed, some powerful influence on the material and political interests of the people in general; and this something else was supplied by the fact that the complete dominance of Lola's beauty over the King enabled her to upset the equilibrium of the party which had hitherto ruled in Bavaria. Through the influence of the dancer Lola Montez the power which the Jesuits had wielded was broken. Owing, however, to the public life of Ludwig's paramour, the pre-Revolution *régime* in Bavaria, the largest state in Germany, collapsed irrevocably at a time when, in other places, people had no inkling that they were standing so near to such an important turning-point in history. So this dance-idyll, inspired though it might be by the tenderest passion, developed into a 'European scandal,' and became the focus of general public criticism.

Fuchs adds, rightly enough, that it would certainly not be true to history if we laid all the blame on the beautiful Spanish dancer for the outbreak of revolution in Bavaria in 1848. Even without Lola Bavaria would certainly not have escaped the storms which broke out all over Germany. Yet the extraordinary beauty and audacity of "the Andalusian," with riding-whip in hand and seduction in her every gesture, so overwhelmed the sixty-year-old King Ludwig I that he did everything she wanted, and she was held responsible for all his faults.

Her very first meeting with the King was typical of them both. Lola Montez was refused an engagement as a dancer by the management of the Munich theatre. She had already received, in Berlin, a rebuff from Frederick William IV, and had had very little success as a dancer on the stage in Paris, London, Madrid, and other capitals. But for Lola Montez there were no obstacles. She had the utmost faith in her irresistible beauty. She knew how and by what means she influenced men. In Munich, therefore, she betook herself, without ceremony, straight to the King, whose numerous love affairs were, of course, well known to her. His affections were, for the moment, unattached, but even if it had not been so, Lola

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would not have hesitated. The existence of a rival would merely have added piquancy to her conquest, for she never doubted her ability to enslave the old and gallant King. Her whole appearance spoke too eloquently the language of the senses for her to fear a rebuff from a ruler so susceptible to feminine beauty. She went to the palace without announcing herself, and without having even requested an audience. Naturally, as soon as she got to the ante-room she had a violent battle with the King's footman. He had no intention of admitting the dancer, but, as she would not be turned away, the major-domo came to his assistance. He proved more amenable, and consented at last to announce her audacious visit to the King. More than that, he appeared to be quite fascinated by Lola's beauty, for he added to his announcement—perhaps not without a purpose—that it might be worth while to see this lady, for she was very beautiful. These words had their effect. After Ludwig I had protested, "What, am I to see every dancer who visits the town?" he suddenly became very much interested, and went on: "Let her in; I will take her to task myself, and bring her to reason." Lola Montez came in. As she stood before him in her closely fitting dress, cut like a riding habit, and setting off her figure to perfection, the old gentleman was immediately captivated, and there was no more talk of 'reason.' He regarded the elegant, beautiful dancer with approval, admiring particularly the lovely curves of her breasts. It was clear, however, that he wondered whether the beauty of her bosom was actually real, or due merely to her skilfully cut dress and to one of those supporting corsets which were worn at this time by every woman, and Lola, feeling her vanity wounded by the unspoken suspicion, snatched a pair of scissors from the King's writing-table, and without more ado slit her dress across. Merely to have unbuttoned or unhooked her bodice would not have been half so effective. A Lola Montez required the passionate gesture, the impulsive act. She had to prove that she was indeed the

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greatly admired "passionate Andalusian" about whom the newspapers of Paris, London, St Petersburg, Warsaw, and Vienna had already related so many piquant stories. For her beauty, her extravagances, her elegance, and the scandal of her life had always been more admired and respected than her art as a dancer, which, indeed, was nothing above the average. That Lola Montez was fêted everywhere had nothing to do with her being a great artist, but was solely due to the legend of her beauty and to her skill in becoming intimate with the most influential men and powerful critics in every town she visited. Her power over men was extraordinary; none whom she thought it worth while to please could resist her magic. There was in her whole personality, in her gestures, in her glance, something both impudent and alluring; there was a boldness in every movement of her hips and of the whole of her body which never failed in its attraction, particularly for elderly *roués* such as the King of Bavaria.

"Lola's beauty," says Fuchs, "particularly the splendour of her breasts, made madmen everywhere." The *Warsaw Courier* in the year 1845, when Lola was performing in Warsaw, published the following rhapsody on her beauty:

Of the three times nine attractions which the Spanish poet considers requisite to feminine beauty Lola possesses six and twenty, and the true connoisseurs among my revered readers will agree with my judgment when I assure them that blue eyes with black hair seem to me more charming than black eyes with black hair. The Spanish poet considers that a lovely woman should have the following twenty-seven beauties—three white: the skin, the teeth, and the hands; three black: the eyes, the lashes, and the brows; three red: the lips, the cheeks, and the nails; three long: the body, the hair, and the hands; three short: the teeth, the ears, and the legs; three large: the breasts, the forehead, and the space between the two eyebrows; three slender: the waist, the hands, and the feet; three plump: the arms, the hips, and the thighs; three thin: the fingers, the hair, and the lips. All these attractions are possessed by Lola in perfect proportions, with the exception of the colour of her eyes, a

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circumstance which I consider the crown of her other charms. Hair soft as silk, rivalling the shining plumage of a raven, falls luxuriantly down her back ; on her slender, delicate neck, whose gleaming whiteness puts swansdown to shame, is poised her lovely face. How am I to describe Lola's breasts when I cannot find words to describe even her teeth ? So that the weakness of my pen may not diminish the fullness of truth, I must don borrowed plumes. Marino says of the goddess of love in the 78th stanza of the 8th canto of *Adone* : "On her lovely cheeks sweet flames of roses and rubies glowed, and in her bosom two perfect apples trembled in a milky sea." Lola's little feet hold the mean between the daintiest Parisienne's and those of a Chinese woman ; her lovely delicate calves are like the two lowest steps of a Jacob's ladder leading to heaven ; her whole figure yesterday evening resembled the Venus of Cnidus, that immortal masterpiece of Praxiteles . . . the greatest beauty of Lola, as of all women, her eyes, I have reserved for the last pen-stroke of my portrait of this famous dancer. When God made the first man and woman He breathed into them an immortal soul ; then He opened their eyes, and therefore I believe that the seat of the soul is the eyes.

Lola's eyes were a deep forget-me-not blue.

The "lovely Andalusian" was only partly Spanish. She was born in 1818 at Limerick, in Ireland, the daughter of Edward Gilbert, afterward Ensign Gilbert of the 44th Foot, and his wife, whose maiden name was Oliver, but who had Spanish blood in her veins. The fiery temperament of the Spanish race and her completely Spanish type she therefore inherited from her mother, and her Christian names were reminiscent of her mother's origin, for she was baptized Maria Dolores Eliza Rosanna. For her career as an international adventuress it was fortunate that Lola Montez spoke several languages. English, French, and Spanish she knew thoroughly, although she could not write them all correctly. When she came to Munich she was thirty. If she had been a pure-bred Spaniard she would probably not have kept her beauty so long, but the intermixture of English blood was an advantage to her,



GRISSETTES

*"Nos Jolies Parisiennes." Lithograph by E. de Beaumont
About 1860*

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keeping her younger and fresher than is usual with Spanish women of that age. In Munich she lived at first with an Englishman. The police spy Hineis, of Vienna, says that this man was her *souteneur*, and that she had met him in Paris, in the Hôtel du Cerf, where, on her very first appearance, she behaved in a most arrogant and outrageous way toward the servants. She spoke to them in the roughest and most insulting fashion, and if they did not obey her immediately she made her riding-whip whistle across their backs. This riding-whip was her constant weapon, mounted or on foot, and with it she punished a page-boy of an hotel in Munich, while carrying on a continual feud with the other servants. Even the manager felt her small but energetic hand on one occasion. Some respectable citizens of Munich were holding a private party in one of the rooms of the hotel one evening. Lola thought it very amusing to intrude on this party, and to stand at the door of the dancing room with her English protector and her huge mastiff, and to ridicule the manners, the dress, and the dancing of the townspeople. She bantered the harmless party in the most impudent way, making the rudest remarks in a loud voice. The citizens of Munich very naturally objected to this behaviour, and the manager was summoned. He expostulated with Lola, and received for his pains a resounding box on the ears. A great hubbub arose, in which the arrogant dancer set her dog on the guests, but eventually she and her lover were ejected, and on the following day she had to leave the hotel. However, the King rented for her a very elegant house in the Theresienstrasse, until he was able to have ready for her the lovely little palace in the Barerstrasse.

The inhabitants of Munich were greatly incensed against the King's mistress, who was not only impudent and eccentric beyond all bounds, but even strove to dominate the country's politics. Already the populace had several times been roused to make attacks on her, and it was feared that there would be still greater demonstrations if Lola received this gift from the

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King. He therefore had the house provided with iron shutters to protect his beloved from stone-throwing and shots. A guard stood perpetually in front of the house with a loaded gun, and from time to time soldiers patrolled the Barerstrasse and the other streets of the vicinity. When she was out walking Lola Montez was always followed at a certain distance by a policeman. Writing in March 1847, Hineis affirms :

At any rate, on the eighth of this month I saw her, protected in this manner, drive up to her house, where she stepped out of her carriage and remained for half an hour, while the mounted police waited beside the vehicle.¹

On one occasion a number of people collected outside the house and looked through the window-panes into the ground-floor rooms ; whereupon another policeman came out of the house and sent them all away, even commanding the more obstinate ones "in the name of the King."

On a later visit which Lola made to her house in the company of the King she was displeased with one of the ceilings, and coaxed his Majesty to have it repainted, but he would not agree. Thereupon she inquired of the painter, who was present with his assistants, what the cost of the repainting was. "Five hundred gulden," he replied. Lola then remarked that she would have it repainted at her own expense, and, turning to the King, she said in broken German: "You are an old miser!" Ludwig was so delighted with this German phrase—he was always urging Lola to learn German—that he immediately ordered the repainting of the ceiling.

She knew very well that the foreign accent in her speech was an added and piquant attraction to her lover, and she made skilful use of this fact. The King undoubtedly liked the foreign element in her and her Spanish origin ; and, in spite of his age, he set himself to learn Spanish in order to converse with his mistress in that language. He liked, too, to hear her

¹ Quoted by Fournier in *Deutsche Revue*, vol. 27.

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read aloud from Calderon or Cervantes; but Lola's own speech was by no means borrowed from the beautiful classical language of these great Spanish poets. She preferred, on the contrary, to use a very common dialect.

Innumerable anecdotes were told about her behaviour in the shops of Munich when buying herself expensive dresses or toilet articles or works of art. When the bill was handed to her she usually said: "You know me. My Louis will pay." She nearly always spoke French in the shops, which makes the play on the word 'louis' more understandable. She had a number of such *bons mots* at her command. When some one asked her whom she saw most often in her house she answered cynically, "*La canaille et le Roi*," meaning by the *canaille* those who so often created disturbance in front of her house and never left her in peace. At the beginning of her reign as favourite she signed her letters to tradesmen and officials as "*Maîtresse du Roi*," and she stopped doing this only when it was brought to the notice of the King and he forbade it. She considered herself a complete autocrat, and announced boldly in the Munich daily papers that she could on no account accept any further petitions for favour. For the public was so much accustomed to turn to the favourite with its petitions and grievances that the task eventually became too much for Lola. She wanted to dispense her favour at her own caprice.

She appeared at the theatre quite without embarrassment, even when the Queen was with the King and the whole Court was present. She had her own box next to the large royal box in the centre, and always created a great sensation, either because of her really unique beauty or because of her amazing and startling *toilettes* and deep *décolleté*, or perhaps, most of all, because of her eccentric character. The jewellery which the King had given her, and which she wore on every possible occasion, but particularly in the theatre, was valued at 60,000 gulden. Ludwig, who had been so miserly with former mistresses, became a spendthrift in Lola's hands. "It is said in Munich,"

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writes Hineis again, "that on her last birthday the King gave Lola 40,000 gulden and a silver service worth 6000 gulden." Her house in the Barerstrasse was furnished with the greatest luxury. Her table-ware was entirely of silver, and her servants wore a more splendid livery than the Court lackeys. Lola herself always dressed with extraordinary elegance, and with such skill that every single charm of her body was shown to full advantage. Even her worst enemies had to admit that she was amazingly beautiful and elegant, nor could they deny that she possessed both wit and intelligence. Her writings were, in all probability, the work of a paid hack, for, although she certainly had had plenty of experience and had the wit to set it down, her faulty education and the life she was leading would have made sustained literary composition difficult. Even her letters are full of spelling mistakes and faulty grammar. Yet her conversation, if neither clever nor profound, was at least always amusing, and the King was never bored by her. She could be amiable and gracious when she liked, for, had she not been so, she would hardly have charmed Franz Liszt and made him, for a time, so completely her slave. She was even able to drive from the field the charming and witty Comtesse d'Agoult, for years the friend of Liszt and the mother of his daughter Cosima Wagner. Lola Montez accompanied the famous virtuoso on many of his concert tours until, at last, she tired of him, perhaps because he ceased to be useful to her. His virtuosity and fame alone were not enough, and she parted from him without regret.

She had no lack of admirers—all men were at her feet. Love-letters and offers of marriage were showered upon her by every post, particularly in Germany, and she grew so conscious of her power over men that she fell in love with the beauty of her own body, and would spend her hours contemplating its perfection. Her memoirs, which are utterly unreliable as a record of the facts of her life, may yet be allowed to throw light on her psychological condition. She remarks :



THE CHARMING POSTILLION

"Nos Jolies Parisiennes." Lithograph by E. de Beaumont
About 1860

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When I returned to my house in Berlin I looked at myself carefully in a *psyche*, an old-fashioned mirror which is still fashionable in Berlin. And I concluded at the end of this examination that I really was beautiful. To be beautiful ! What power and what good fortune ! To need only to appear in order to attract all eyes to oneself, to exact homage, to inspire love and enthusiasm ! As we pass on our way, to see every one bowing to our beauty with as much respect as is paid to a great man ! To rule the masses by a movement of one's beautiful eyes, just as a great man rules them by the fire of his words and the eloquence of his gestures ! How wonderful it is to be able to say : " I am beautiful and I know it ! " Beauty is a diadem, a sign of royal power which mankind has never been able to deny. A kingdom by God's grace, for Providence writes it on the brow of the chosen to whom He gives this power, the truest and most glorious power, if only one understands a little how to use it !

She understood this perfectly, as we have seen. But she wanted to rule men not only by her beauty, but, if necessary, with the help of her whip. There was undoubtedly a sadistic streak in her nature, a masculine desire to inflict pain, rather than a feminine willingness to receive it. She scorned any woman who submitted her will to that of the man she loved, observing :

It is said that there are women who are foolish enough to love men and let themselves be ruled by them. I call that a topsy-turvy *ménage*. For my part, I have never believed in such a thing.

And yet even she sometimes, seldom though it may have been, discovered that there were men she could not fascinate, for all the seduction of her figure and the passionate eagerness of her face. On her second visit to Paris, when her dancing was a failure, and the admirers of her beauty, Dujarier, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas, Janin, Fierontino, Sue, and other poets and journalists, paid tributes to the artist only because they were in love with the woman, she tried her utmost to conquer Émile Girardin, a very influential writer of

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the time. But, in spite of all her advances, the sight of her beauty left him cold and indifferent, and she had to admit her failure.

I tried to exercise my magic powers on this wild-eyed, pale-faced man, but I did not succeed. His eyes always turned away from mine. It would require the glance of a lion to dazzle such a man.

Dujarier, on the other hand, was entirely subjugated, and he paid with his life for his enthusiasm for the beautiful, extravagant Señorita. For when the Parisian critic Beauvallon commented very adversely on Lola's *boleros* and *cachuchas* she was so greatly offended that she charged her friend Dujarier to defend her honour. A terrible quarrel arose between the two men—a quarrel which ended in a duel. Dujarier was killed by his opponent, and it became impossible for Lola to remain in Paris.

She turned her steps to Germany, where the reputation had preceded her of being not only a remarkably beautiful woman, but also a great adventuress. She appeared in Baden-Baden in the year 1846, and created the greatest sensation by her amazing *toilettes* and the wealth which she displayed. She was angling for a rich lover; it was, therefore, very important for her to attract attention, and, like all adventuresses, she was very willing to throw away a sprat to catch a whale, even at the risk of making debts which she might not be able to meet. But she did not anticipate any such calamity. She knew that some one would be found to put his cheque-book at her disposal, and in no long time he was found, for she made the acquaintance of King Henry LXXII of Reuss-Lobenstein-Ebersdorf. The first time he saw "the Andalusian" riding in the promenade his heart and senses were alike inflamed. Lola Montez did not need to make any great effort to enslave him. Her mere appearance was enough for Henry LXXII. Their acquaintance ripened quickly, and very soon he invited her to follow him to his little kingdom. Lola accepted the

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invitation gladly, for although Henry LXXII was only a kind of pocket royalty, none the less she found it very attractive to be the mistress of a prince, for hitherto she had had as her lovers only "bankers, rich merchants, famous artists, writers, and poets." Furthermore, she was attracted by the novelty of provoking and exciting by her extravagances the small-town, *bourgeois* morality of an insignificant Court. And when she followed her new admirer to his 'kingdom' her foreign appearance, her reddened lips, her interesting face, made up with every sophisticated art, her elegance, but above all her arrogant bearing, had the effect of a bombshell on the simple inhabitants of the small capital. When Lola Montez went out driving or riding every window opened, as the occupants of the houses strove to get a glimpse, if only for a moment, of "this amazingly rouged person" who was passing by. If her carriage stopped outside a shop all the idle and curious collected in front of the shop, so that her servant had to make a path through the crowd for her to return to the carriage. Such a situation suited Lola perfectly. She wanted to be provocative, wanted to attract attention, to be surrounded by a crowd, whether hostile or friendly. Soon, however, the subjects of Reuss had had enough of the Amazon, who considered that she had the right to bend them to her will with her riding-whip. Some of Henry LXXII's officers took offence at her use of this instrument, and complained to their monarch. Lola's tricks shocked even the lovesick Prince himself, and one day she received an official dismissal. The immediate cause of this was that, mounted on her wonderful thoroughbred, she had galloped over the well-tended flower-beds of the Prince's castle gardens, repeating this diversion several times, in spite of the remonstrances of her friend and the indignation of the townspeople. Henry LXXII called her a "female devil," and banished her from his 'states' for ever.

The mad dancer did not take it much to heart; she did not regret her 'insignificant' lover, but turned her mind resolutely

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to other adventures. After she had presented Henry LXXII with a by no means trifling bill, which he settled, she betook herself to Munich, and here she found, as she admits herself, "the man she was looking for."

She wheedled him with her voluptuous tenderness, her lively wit, her incredible high spirits, and her infallible talent for giving herself to a man in the manner that pleased him best. King Ludwig I of Bavaria came completely under her sway, and actually persuaded himself that he had found the woman who could give him the highest, most rapturous love. He expressed his feelings in verses, of which the following may serve as a sufficient sample :

Never thou grievest thy lover with heartless and idle caprices ;
Never with him dost thou play a wantoning game.
Self-seeking knowest thou not ; generous and kind is thy nature ;
Bounteous thou art, my Beloved, and ever the same.
Happy is he who commands thy heart for his eager possessing !
Not like those lovers who pine for a mistress unkind.
Thou lovest, and love is for thee a bright and unquenchable
 beacon ;
Constant till death is thy heart, unaltered thy mind.
Hunger and thirst of my soul, unquenched by Italian caresses—
I thought to find happiness so, but found only pain—
"Happiness, happiness," still I cried with insatiable longing,
And such I discovered in thee, thou woman of Spain.

But it was not only the old King who was seized with love and enthusiasm for the beautiful dancer. Her immeasurable successes with men in general consoled Lola Montez for the defeats which she had to suffer as a stage artist. In Munich she danced only twice, yet she was the idol of young and old. Her portrait adorned tie-pins, cigarette-cases, tobacco-boxes. Young bachelors and old *roués* decorated their houses and rooms with every variety of her published picture. Students sang serenades in front of her house, partly, no doubt, in order that they might look into the brightly lighted rooms and observe her intimate life. For her whole existence was a public performance, and it never occurred to her to close shutters or



GOSSIP AT THE TOILET-TABLE
"Nos Jolies Parisiennes." Lithograph by E. de Beaumont
About 1860

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draw curtains. Anyone might see whom she received, with whom she flirted, how she dressed herself. Her dressmakers had to fit her dresses and underwear on her naked body. Her boudoir and dressing-room held no secrets from anyone. But she did not manage this exhibitionism with the grace and charming coquetry of the women of the eighteenth century, or even with that of Pauline Borghese during the First Empire. Lola was essentially provocative, and everything she did gave rise to criticism. Fuchs calls her "provocation incarnate," and describes her most aptly in these words :

"I am lust," said her body. "My breasts yearn for a lover's caressing hand; my limbs desire to stretch and tighten themselves in unbridled and eternal lust." Her body sang this song in fascinating rhythm.

The erotic problem, which most women solve for themselves, or at least attempt to solve, unconsciously, Lola Montez worked out with deliberate skill. She knew how to dress so as always to appear, in a man's imagination, completely naked; she understood the great secret of the toilet: to show nothing, and yet to produce an effect of nakedness on every one. Lola knew that the smart, closely fitting riding habit betrayed, better than any other, the hot life pulsating in her veins. She knew that in this costume she could better suggest the undulations of her bosom and the indolent movements of her thighs—everything, in fact, that incites men to passion. She liked, therefore, to wear a riding costume, not only on horseback, but when walking through the streets or even in a *salon* or at a party. She knew that velvet, the fashionable material of the period, by its plastic, clinging effect, arouses lustful thoughts in the erotically inclined, and so she wore only velvet. Gestures and movements no less provocative went with this provocative costume. Everything was adapted to her Amazon habit: step, gait, posture—all provocatively impudent. Everything about her provoked desire;

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her every movement promised pleasure. Her smile was a drop in the glowing goblet which every man thirsted to drain to the lees. There was no *naïveté* in this behaviour. On the contrary, it was the calculated deliberation of Lola's eroticism which raised it to the level of a work of art.

Just as Lola, as lust incarnate, shocked the *bourgeois* respectability of Munich, with all its conceptions of morality and decency, so she offended the more *spirituel* sections of its society by the impudence of her speech and her judgments. Her arrogance and cynicism outraged the conceptions of justice and law which are sacred to every *bourgeois*. Lola Montez dispensed herself, with her own hand, every judgment that it pleased her to make, and she emphasized her displeasure by a box on the ear or a stroke of her riding-whip—her wrist being as doughty as her tongue—and with this whip, and with her mastiff trained to attack men, she made her own way through the powers that were ranged against her. Such behaviour was customary with her during the whole period of her sway in Munich.

The most famous painters and sculptors immortalized this demon-woman innumerable times in pictures and statues, to the delight of the King and of Lola herself, yet she was implacable to those in whose work she seemed to detect a hint of caricature. And yet never has a beautiful woman been so ridiculed by caricaturists as was this dancer who took such pride in her physical attractions. In his excellent work *Ein vormärzliches Tanzidyll: Lola Montez in der Karikatur*, Fuchs has described most of these extremely amusing (and in some cases very rare and artistically valuable) sheets which pour scorn on Ludwig's mistress, the "German Pompadour." He tells a story, among others, of an oil-painting of the "devil-woman" painted by Kaulbach which, for a long time, was kept a secret from the King and from Lola herself. It represented the dancer with a snake round her naked body and a cup of poison in her hand. "The fact that Kaulbach was painting this

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picture," writes Fuchs, following the story as told some years previously by a friend of Kaulbach's,

became known to the King, and one day he shot with characteristic abruptness into Kaulbach's studio. "Kaulbach, what do I hear? What have you done? This is an insult to me too! Just wait—Lola will pay you out for this!" And without looking at the picture or giving Kaulbach a chance to speak he was gone again. The painter, who knew how quickly the hot-blooded daughter of the South revenged an insult, prepared for all emergencies by carefully keeping a heavy whip near his easel. He had not long to wait. Exactly an hour later the door was flung open again, and Lola Montez appeared, in a furious rage, her great mastiff at her side and the King at her heels. Kaulbach, scenting unpleasantness, immediately seized his whip, exactly at the moment when Lola set her mastiff on him. But Kaulbach also had a dog, a gigantic Newfoundland, which, without being called, rushed suddenly from behind the easel and seized Lola's mastiff by the throat. That changed the situation. The two beasts bit each other furiously and rushed out into the yard. In fear and fury Lola flew after her dog; the King flew after Lola, and Kaulbach flew after him. Thus the scene, which had begun so threateningly, had a humorous ending, for the two dog-owners had the utmost trouble in separating their four-footed defenders. A general retreat closed the lively scene—that is to say, for the time being. But, although Kaulbach did not publish the picture, his audacity was neither forgiven nor forgotten.

In spite of Lola's great influence over the King, she never succeeded in forcing an entry into aristocratic society, although as Countess of Landsfeld she held a kind of Court and gathered a number of important people round her. But the higher circles excluded her, and even the personal efforts of the King to force an entry for her were frustrated. Appearances had to be respected, and, whatever its secret tendencies, and however wild the lives of its members might be, Society boycotted Lola. Even the men who frequented her house were conscious of the scorn in which the arrogant adventuress was held. Many kept their intercourse with her a secret, and

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never admitted openly that they visited the *salon* of the royal mistress. When Saphir was giving public lectures in Munich he avoided appearing at the courtesan's house for a long time, although Ludwig gave him a direct invitation to Lola's evening parties. He was afraid of respectable public opinion, and so did not call on Lola until the last day of his stay in Munich. However, there were others who fought for the favour of being in her presence, and it is by no means an exaggeration when one of her flatterers says: "The best intellects of her century helped to draw her victorious chariot."

Eventually, however, she went too far even for Munich. When Görres, her greatest enemy and opponent, died and was buried in Munich in 1848 there were renewed demonstrations against the hated favourite, and these events brought about her final dismissal. The King had already removed his eccentric mistress from the capital to avoid the popular clamour, and had sent her to the mesmerist Justinus Kerner at his house in Weinsberg, in order that Kerner might "drive the devil out of her." Kerner wrote to his daughter, Marie Niethamer:

Lola Montez arrived here yesterday, and I am keeping her at my house until further orders from Munich. Three agents are on guard there. I am annoyed that the King should have sent her to me first, but he was told that Lola was possessed, and that he should send her to me at Weinsberg to drive the devil out of her. However, it is interesting. Before I treat her magnetically I shall submit her to a starvation cure. She gets only thirteen drops of raspberry water every day and a quarter of a white wafer. But do not tell anyone. Burn this letter.

Kerner's son Theobald, who helped his father with his mesmeric cures, was detailed to magnetize the "devil-woman," but it was of no avail. The 'devil' was in Lola's flesh and blood. She was neither hysterical nor unhinged; she did not feel in the least ill, and she would not submit to the 'devil cure.' Starvation, in particular, she would not endure, and one day disappeared from Weinsberg secretly. She turned up in

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Munich once more and visited the King, hoping he would be at her feet as before. But Ludwig seemed to think that she was no longer worth his protection. The famous decree of March 17, 1848, was published, in which the King declared that "the Countess of Landsfeld has ceased to possess the rights of a Bavarian subject." For a time he still gave her financial support, until he wearied of her importunity and sent no more.

In 1849 she came to England, and in July of that year married George Trafford Heald at St George's, Hanover Square. But the beginning of all her adventures had been a runaway match with Captain Thomas James, who married her, in Ireland, in 1837. This marriage, although Captain James had applied for a divorce, had never been properly dissolved, with the result that the relations of Heald had a charge of bigamy preferred against Lola. She fled with her new husband to Spain, and he is said to have been drowned at Lisbon in 1853.

Two years before this she appeared as a dancer in New York, and in 1853 married P. P. Hull, the proprietor of the *San Francisco Whig*. She soon left him, however, and continued her career as a dancer. Again in New York in 1859 she met an old schoolfellow, who turned her thoughts to religion, with such effect that Lola devoted the remaining two years of her life to rescue work among fallen women. Early in 1861 she was stricken with paralysis, and died, sincerely penitent, in a sanatorium in New York. She was barely forty-two years of age.

THE LIONESSES OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

WITH their ostentation, their high-spirited daring, their extravagant luxury, their impudence and their caprice, their frank licentiousness and their influence on the manners of the period, the lionesses of the Second Empire bear some resemblance to the reigning beauties of the eighteenth century. Yet the woman of the Second Empire is a distinctive type. Mlle Romieu was a close observer of the life led by the lady of the Second Empire and later, and in her book *Les Femmes et la société* she says :

The great lady of the financial world, who made her first appearance under Louis-Philippe, and the great lady of to-day are in many ways comparable. Both are elegant and rich, and both have an artificial charm which is acquired by familiarity with the great world.

The distinguished lady of the Faubourg Saint-Germain is an aristocrat. She is in the full sense of the word a *grande dame*, of a type not to be found elsewhere. Well bred to the point of anæmia, graceful to the verge of artificiality, she preserves, in spite of her nervous prejudices, a certain nobility of sentiment.

In the highest circles of society nothing is expected of a woman but that she should be alluring. She has no duties to perform other than so-called social duties. Receiving or returning visits, walking or driving, and other social pleasures occupy the whole of her day-time ; she has no time to play the part of a housewife, apart from doing the honours at her *salon*, nor of mother of the family. Her servants are in charge of a steward or housekeeper ; her children have governesses and tutors.

Her power, which is founded on coquetry, is immeasurable. From the minister to the humblest official of the Court, from

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the great financier to the most insignificant clerk—all men are under the spell of woman, woman in full bloom. In his *Das Weib in der Kunst der neueren Zeit* Moreck remarks :

Whereas the preference of artists in the *Biedermeier* period was for undeveloped womanhood with bud-like, slender figure and demure behaviour, amiable young womanhood, and naïve, virginal innocence, the painters of the Second Empire are concerned only with the full-blown charm of the ripe, intelligent woman, experienced in all the arts of love, and playing with a practised hand over the whole keyboard of sensuality.

The art of a period is a mirror of its life, and the woman of the Second Empire lived up to the artists' conception of her. She exploited her attractions freely, and exalted coquetry and frivolity to the level of fine arts. The great woman of Society moved, as it were, in an atmosphere of intrigue, surrounded by a cloud of voluptuous perfume, and men of the world were able to count among their mistresses the most respected and highly placed women of fashion. Men and women alike flattered from one experience to another.

The world of that period wanted a woman who would rule it, and the women of the Second Empire were what the period demanded of them. Even ladies of the highest circles set no limits to their frivolity, no bounds to pleasure-seeking. When they were satiated with the pleasures which Paphos offered them they plunged into the joys of Lesbos. The Countess Trubetzkoi and the Marquise Adda, two beauties of the circle of the Princesse Mathilde Bonaparte, were quite frankly in love with one another. They were always together, and exchanged caresses without embarrassment. Many a great lady fell in love with her own maid, and in the year 1855 a great scandal was caused by a blackmail case in which the Comtesse Nansouty was involved. It had been noticed in Parisian Society that this usually very elegant woman had for some time been wearing no jewellery, although the splendour of her jewels was famous. When her husband questioned her she could give him no

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explanation. He became suspicious that she had sold them, and had her jewel cabinet broken open. It was empty! Madame denied having removed the jewels. Where were they? Stolen? The Comte ordered an official search of the house, and the jewels were found in the room of the young and very pretty chambermaid. The maid was accused of theft, until, under cross-examination in the court, she admitted that she was the Comtesse's lover, but had submitted to her mistress's desires only on condition that the jewellery was given to her. Madame had thereupon given her all her jewels. In the course of the trial the girl exposed several other marquises and duchesses, among others the Marquise Adda, mentioned above, and in order to stifle the scandal the maid was given 80,000 francs hush-money. Affairs of this kind were not rare.

The woman who was lavish with her favours and about whom the most scandals were related was the one most in demand. A single instance will suffice. The very beautiful Mme de Nesselrode, wife of the Russian Ambassador in Paris, had the reputation of being extremely elegant, but also very extravagant and frivolous. For a time she was the mistress of Alexandre Dumas, and was seen everywhere with him in public. The balls at the Opéra under the Second Empire were just as popular and notorious as in the eighteenth century, and one evening Dumas appeared at one of these, on his arm an elegant female domino wearing a complete mask. The two encountered Didier, the Under-Prefect of Saint-Denis, a man notoriously immoral. After they had greeted one another young Dumas said to Didier: "You like duchesses, don't you? Amuse yourself for half an hour with this lady." And he left the pretty domino at his side to the young *roué*. Didier associated mostly with light ladies of the theatre, *demi-mondaines*, or common prostitutes, and Dumas's reference to the "duchesses" with whom he liked to associate was merely irony. In spite of his youth Didier was very *blasé*, and was firmly of opinion that women existed solely for the pleasure of



THE CANCAN
Coloured lithograph. Paris
About 1860

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men. He led the domino whom his friend had left with him, and whom he did not recognize as the Comtesse Nesselrode, to a proscenium box, and treated her just like a *cocotte*, without any objection on her part. After half an hour she was fetched away again by Dumas, and the two drove home quite gaily. The ladies of the age of gallantry could not have behaved more freely or with less embarrassment in the pursuit of pleasure than the women of the Second Empire.

This epoch had yet another similarity with the eighteenth century, for the crinoline of the Second Empire bore a striking resemblance to the hoop of the Rococo period. The horsehair underskirt, the starched petticoats with their many flounces, worn by the ladies of the Romantic period had, in the year 1855, been replaced by a hooped frame, within which the queens of fashion moved as in a cage. No fashion has evoked such mockery or provoked so many attacks as the crinoline, yet it survived them all. Not only in comic papers, but also in serious works, like Friedrich Theodor Vischer's *Wissenschaft des Schönen*, the crinoline was ridiculed, but always without effect. Vischer remarks:

The crinoline is impertinent. Impertinent, of course, in the first place on account of the great space it demands for the individual. But that is much too ordinary and abstract a way of speaking; no—it is impertinent because of its tremendously provocative effect on men. “Will you,” says the crinoline to the individual of the male sex who approaches it, “go to the other side of the road, or will you dare to touch me or push against me? Will you who are sitting beside me in the stalls take hold of my dress and sit upon it? Do you feel the iron hoops? Do you feel the impregnable fortress, the terrible chastity-belt, which presses against your legs?” Are we too frivolous? O charming reader, you yourself will not take us dry scholars to be so innocent as to think that we do not know what clothes are and mean to the fair sex, or that we imagine that they could ever be anything else than a world of suggestions and insinuations, a silently eloquent language, an armoury of gentle questions, terrible refusals, pathetic supplications, cruel threats, burning avowals, cold

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decisions, or that it is hidden from us which are the more seductive among these weapons, the compliant or the deterrent, or that we are in doubt as to what more emboldens a man, to be enticed or to be repelled. But you, immoral creature, do you pretend that a dress that stands out so far from the actual figure that it calls up no image of it is a moral and proper costume? On the contrary . . . it is the contrast which attracts, the distortion which causes one to think about the true figure and rouses one's curiosity about nature's secrets, and leads the careful investigator to wait until one of those inevitable tilts of the hoop discloses more than the dress itself, and thus the bold conqueror—but stay! You sweet innocent creature who may chance to read these words, yourself wearing a crinoline, do not misjudge us! We are not so bad as we look; we do not attach to the individual the blame for the evil thoughts that a deceitful costume puts into our heads; we do not imagine that every amiable wearer harbours in her little head the wicked thoughts that lurk in these frames; we know the power of fashion, which dazzles and masters them . . . but do not let it be thought that those who tend the great witches' cauldron in Paris, whence these fashions come, are not aware of what they are brewing.

So much is obvious, and the inventors of fashion have always known it, for every mode is conceived for the same purpose, and the elegant women of the Second Empire followed this whim of fashion to the end, until a new one took its place.

There are some very amusing passages about the crinoline in Wendel's work *Die Mode in der Karikatur*.¹ Challamel too, in his *Histoire de la mode*, makes fun of the "wire cage," and censures the silliness of the women who encased themselves with such monstrosities. He says:

The most profound political questions of the day were not more seriously discussed by French men than the crinoline by French women, for, in spite of its enemies, the crinoline soon held absolute sway.

Many women who had at first energetically resisted it

¹ Paul Aretz Verlag, Dresden, 1928.

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adopted it eventually, the slim pretending to a corpulence they did not possess rather than be behind the times. Those who did not wish to wear the wire frame sewed hoops into their skirts, or put on four or five very stiffly starched petticoats with many flounces. Whatever method was adopted the fashion was more of a burden than a pleasure. Women looked like dolls, and Taine's dictum is more applicable to the Second Empire than to any other period: "In France we are only too ready to think that a woman is only a woman when she is a doll!"

The lovely Empress Eugénie, formerly Mlle de Montijo, to whom the introduction of the crinoline is wrongly attributed, was not only a great enchantress in a whole Court of enchantresses, but also, from the day of her first appearance, the accepted ruler of elegance. She took no pleasure in the prevailing corruption of manners, nor did she herself as Empress lead a dissolute life, and many of her unrestrained contemporaries, even in the highest circles, would have done well to take example by her. But Eugénie was a coquette, fond of pleasure, very elegant, and very beautiful—things which can only too easily injure a woman's reputation; but for those in her circle, whose morals were by no means unimpeachable, she cannot altogether be made responsible. She was a woman to whom the incense of admiration was a necessity. She liked to play the flirt, and, although she never gave the Emperor cause for his own innumerable escapades, it pleased her, none the less, as it were *en passant*, to inflame the hearts of men. She needed these sensations, this confirmation of her irresistible charm, of her attractive Southern grace and beauty, and enjoyed such moments to the full. A chance encounter, a whim, the fantasy of an hour, had for her the piquant charm of the unknown, and she gave herself up to it with the impulsiveness of her Spanish temperament. Sometimes she plunged into these little adventures with a certain lack of caution which is rather reminiscent of the inconsequent gaiety of Marie-Antoinette.

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Masked balls had the same irresistible attraction for her as they had for that other foreigner on the throne of France, for at these she could put aside the etiquette of the Court ; she was relieved for a few hours of the burden of the crown ; she felt as free as any ordinary woman, and could imagine herself back in those times when, as Mlle de Montijo, she had danced and flirted as she liked at balls and masquerades. Then there was the charm of mystery—the knowledge that no one suspected the face behind the mask, nor could guess the identity of the woman with whom the evening of flirtation had been passed.

It happened sometimes, however, that her Majesty would be tiresomely pressed by some all too stormy gallant, and would be placed in a position of great embarrassment, particularly if she ventured to go masked to comparatively unfashionable balls where she was completely unknown. At the balls at the Tuileries she was usually recognized by certain idiosyncrasies of her movements, her walk, her gestures, her manner of speech, and the domino was an insufficient disguise for anyone who knew her. Nevertheless, it happened once that even in her own circle she was not recognized, and had to submit to a passionate declaration of love from some spoiled and impudent man of pleasure. Such was the Marquis de C., a convinced legitimist. He had never set foot in the Tuileries during the reign of Napoleon III, and therefore did not know the Empress well. The masked ball at which she encountered him as a domino took place at the house of the Duc de Morny. As a connoisseur of women the Marquis at once noticed the elegant mask with her seductive movements, her indescribable grace and charming figure. He followed her closely, and became completely enamoured of the beautiful stranger. She was not disinclined to flirt with him, but refused to remove her mask or disclose her identity, guarding her incognito most strictly. He became more and more pressing, and played the fond and passionate lover to such a degree that the coquettish woman became frightened, fled from him, and disappeared in



AN ELEGANT EQUIPAGE
Water-colour by C. Guys

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the crowd. For a period he lost sight of his mysterious friend. Finally he discovered her again in a little *salon* with the Duchess of Bassano. He pushed his way up to her, and whispered in her ear: "I shall not leave you, lovely domino, until you have told me your name and until I have freed your face from that hideous velvet mask." His passionate words of love became more and more insistent. But she laughed and refused to enlighten him. Then he became more daring, and said: "Very well, if you will not tell me voluntarily who you are I will compel you to do so by force. I shall watch when you leave the ball and step into your carriage; and if by then you have not given me the information I want I shall hurry to your house as quickly as your horses, and await you at your door. Then it will not be difficult for me to find out who you are." But even these bold words could not daunt the coquette. She replied with feigned sentimentality: "Follow your whim, sir. If your heart is not true I have no use for you. But if I can believe your declarations of love and the feelings which you have expressed for me, do not attempt to probe my secret. As a reward I promise to fulfil your wish if it is reasonable." "What else could I wish for than a rendezvous?" replied the Marquis. "A rendezvous? Well, that is not easy, but it shall be granted to you. But it must not be at my house. I am married. But you can see me again to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock near the lake in the Bois de Boulogne. I shall be driving in an open landau, and I will press my handkerchief to my lips twice. By that you will be able to recognize me."

At the appointed hour the Marquis repaired to the Bois de Boulogne. His hopes had mounted high, and he was already picturing to himself a love affair with the beautiful stranger, or, at least, a few hours of intimacy. Charming women in coroneted landaus rolled by his carriage, but none of them raised a lace-edged handkerchief to her lips. Suddenly the excitement and curiosity among the crowds of pedestrians and in the long line of carriages became intense. All stood still, and

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cheers announced the approach of the Empress's carriage. The Marquis de C. too had stopped his carriage, and had bared his head to greet her Majesty. She drove by slowly in her landau drawn by four horses. But what were his feelings? Was he mistaken or could it be a fact? With a quick gesture the Empress raised her handkerchief twice to her mouth and smiled. So she was the elegant mask whom he had pursued the night before? He had not recovered from his astonishment when the royal equerry left the Imperial retinue and, stepping up to the Marquis's carriage, said to him: "Sir, her Majesty wishes to know on which day it would be convenient for you to be invited to the Tuileries." But he did not accept this amiable invitation: his royalist convictions were stronger even than the temptation to be admitted to the intimacy of the Empress.

Napoleon III, when he was still Prince Louis-Napoleon, had shown himself more susceptible, for he fell in love with her at first sight. The lovely girl possessed a quite unique charm. Her pleasing voice, her foreign accent, her smile, her supple Spanish grace—everything served to enhance the immense feminine charm which Eugénie de Montijo possessed. Louis-Napoleon first saw her in the *salon* of his cousin the clever Princesse Mathilde, a *salon* crowded, as always, with beautiful women, international celebrities in art and literature, distinguished foreigners, politicians, and adventurers. The Montijo ladies, mother and daughter, fell into the last-named category, for, although they came of an old Spanish grandee family, they were in poor circumstances, and the mother, at least, was quite frankly an adventuress.

During dinner Prince Louis-Napoleon gave his attention exclusively to the lovely stranger, and a few days later he paid her his first visit in the luxurious apartment which Eugénie de Montijo occupied with her mother at No. 12 Place de Vendôme. The *Chronique scandaleuse* relates that the future Emperor paid his attentions to the twenty-six-year-old Mlle



DEMI-MONDAINE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

Water-colour by C. Guys. About 1860

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de Montijo in such a way as to lead to the supposition that he wished to make her his mistress. But, however warmly Napoleon pressed his suit, the answer was always: "Prince, only as your legal wife." He fell more and more in love with her, particularly when he saw her later at one of the hunting parties at Fontainebleau sitting her horse with a grace that none of the women of his acquaintance possessed. "Mlle de Montijo, a young blonde Spaniard, is the object of the Prince's attentions since his visit to Fontainebleau," reported Viel-Castel. At that time Napoleon was already President, and soon afterward he became Emperor of France. Viel-Castel continues:

The Court is still at Compiègne, where there is hunting and dancing and other amusements. The Emperor is deeply in love with Mlle de Montijo, the beautiful, graceful Spaniard, whose sister is married to the Duke of Alba. Mlle de Montijo joins in all the merriment. She is obviously the favourite, but I do not think that she will submit to the will of a conqueror. . . . The Court is prolonging its stay at Compiègne. The Emperor is enjoying himself here. Mlle de Montijo receives a lot of attention and is made much of.

She and her mother were among the guests invited to the Imperial Court, but Napoleon III was at that time very far from contemplating a marriage with Eugénie de Montijo. It was only after he had knocked in vain at the gates of all the Courts of Europe that his choice fell on the woman to whom his heart belonged. As though in revenge for not having been given an infanta, he proposed for the hand of the enchanting Spaniard, who was indeed a descendant of the Guzman, but none the less very far from a throne. In the Court circles it could hardly be believed. What? A love match in such a high position of power? Such things did then happen outside fairy-stories? This extraordinary event was the sole topic of conversation, and everyone wanted to be the first to receive in his house the future Empress.

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The Duc de Morny organized a splendid banquet in honour of Eugénie and her mother. All the most elegant ladies of the great world of Paris were invited, but they were not all aware of the theatrical coup which was being prepared; and for those who had been let into the secret it was an amusing comedy to observe how people would behave toward the Montijo ladies. A few marquises and duchesses, and even the wives of ambassadors and diplomats, had already turned up their noses when they heard that the Countess of Montijo and her daughter were to be present, and behind their open fans scandal was busy.

But when Eugénie de Montijo appeared in an enchanting *toilette* of white tulle, with all her grace and charm and amiability, they had to admit that she was at least a lovely and desirable woman.

On January 30, 1853, the descendant of the Guzman, with all the pomp of religion and all the brilliant ceremony of the Court, became Empress of France. Even the people in the streets were astonished at her beauty, and rejoiced that Napoleon III had displayed such perfect taste in the choice of his partner on the throne. From the very first day of her reign she was able to impress her individual taste in dress on France and all other European countries. As a bride she wore a dress of white silk velvet with a long train. The skirt was trimmed with innumerable flounces of costly Alençon lace, the bodice embroidered all over with diamonds. The bridal veil, which was also of Alençon lace, was held in place by a wreath of orange blossom and a wonderful diadem of sapphires. She wore her magnificent gold-brown hair curled up high above her forehead, and her charming *coiffure* immediately became the almost universal fashion.

Without being in the first bloom of youth, Eugénie possessed the dazzling freshness of a young girl. The harmonious proportions of her figure and the beauty of her face—a profile as pure as an antique cameo—were beyond criticism. But her



THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE
Oil-painting by F.-X. Winterhalter

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features were not only faultless—every one of them possessed its own extraordinary charm, and blended into the perfection of the whole. Her wonderful shining blue eyes—which did not then betray the fact that she could look coldly upon the world—a charming, very small, delicately moulded mouth, her delicate, almost transparent complexion, hair which was not blonde, nor red, nor brown, but had a golden gleam which none but she possessed—in short, everything about her contributed to the same dazzling effect. Most enchanting of all was the fresh gaiety of her character. The Emperor himself said later, when she was his wife, “No one could please me better. She is modest, she is gay, she is kind, and she is clever.” It is true this did not prevent him from being frequently unfaithful to her, and she herself often condoned his escapades; indeed, she was often the friend of his mistresses. The Florentine Countess Walewska was one of his favourites for a long time and the intimate friend of the Empress, as was also the Comtesse Labédoyère, who enjoyed his favour.

With Eugénie’s promotion to the throne of the Second Empire a new epoch of elegance was inaugurated. Festivity followed on festivity, and Eugénie was worshipped as a goddess dispensing pleasure. The whole of Paris was at her feet, while her journey through the western provinces of France was one long triumphal procession. She was amiable to every one. She knew how to include in her greeting with one graceful gesture, one glance from her bright eyes, the whole of the crowd pressing round her carriage, so that every one felt he had been picked out personally. When she went driving in Paris she was so overwhelmed with bouquets that her carriage used to look like a carnival car after the battle of flowers. She was most fortunate in her efforts to make herself popular. Everywhere her generosity and her beneficence were praised. She gave with open hands, and the sacrifice which she made on the day after her marriage was talked of for a long time. The city of Paris had given her as a wedding gift a wonderful diamond

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necklace, but Eugénie refused to accept it, and allocated the value of the jewels for distribution among the poor. This did not prevent her, however, from immediately afterward accepting a similar piece of jewellery from the Emperor, the value of which was estimated at a million francs. She never tired of initiating philanthropic works, organizing charity *fêtes* and bazaars, and the Press could not find words with which to praise the magnificence of the new Empress's charity. These *fêtes*, however, were not organized merely with a view to their charitable objects; they gave Eugénie an admirable opportunity for displaying her elegance and beauty. When she appeared at one of them in a new, wonderfully tasteful *toilette* the whole world talked about her. Balls and bazaars were the frame in which her strange Southern beauty and her charm were best set off. Nothing was better fitted to bring popularity to a beautiful woman and an Empress, but, again, nothing was better suited to pander to her extravagance and love of splendour and to her craving for luxury. The thirst for ostentatious luxury spread among her subjects, and aristocratic ladies and wives of the rich bankers and financiers vied with one another in a costly display, which called forth the following' extraordinarily sharp criticism from a Parisian historian:

Show and glamour—that is the existence of these elegant ladies who have put off humanity in obedience to the dictates of fashion. Under their narrow, tightly corseted figures hearts beat no longer; under the dull white skin their blood no longer circulates. These delicate bodies do not seem to be made for motherhood, and real passion would destroy them. These flirts decked out in silk and lace who drive about in grand carriages do not live as other human beings; they are surrounded by a perpetual incense, and the cloud in which they live is as intoxicating as it is artificial.

At the evening parties where they appear for a moment at the side of their husbands they do not even feel the deep emptiness, the heart-rending misery of these correct, haughty assemblies, at which every kind of real conversation is forbidden,

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and only chilly conventions reign: formal introductions, cold greetings, and the ritual of conventional small-talk. Their only intellectual occupation during these hours is the discussion of other women's dresses, the appraisal of the diamonds they are wearing on their necks, and the careful memorizing of such details in order to have some material for conversation on their next afternoon at home.

The Parisians of the great world had ample material for conversation when the Montijo ladies were introduced at Court, and later, when the Empress herself became the queen of elegance. The Court of the Second Empire was hardly rivalled by the First in splendour and elegance. But it was freer, gayer, and less ceremonious than the Court of Napoleon I. Eugénie, especially in her prime, loved to surround herself with beautiful and elegant women who were gifted with youth and grace, good taste, gaiety, extravagance, and high spirits. Her irresistible charm was enhanced in this harmonious circle, which threw into high relief her own elegance, her mature beauty, and her unique position. What had she to fear from comparison with the most beautiful women of her circle? Her features left nothing to be desired. The brilliant expression of her almond eyes, her pale complexion, the classic beauty of her neck, her shoulders, her breasts, which peeped out of a cloud of tulle or muslin, and, above all, the elastic gait of the Southerner aroused universal admiration and could hardly fear a rival—certainly not in the first period of her presence at Court, when she had not yet the assurance of a celebrated beauty and the *hauteur* of an accepted ruler. She was one of the most elegant women of her day, but she was not the 'inventor' of the crinoline. On the contrary, in 1860, she was one of the first to discard it. She wore it, on æsthetic grounds, only during her pregnancy. One of her ladies-in-waiting, Mme Carette, speaks in her memoirs of the crinoline fashion, how uncomfortable and unpractical it was, and says that the Empress herself very soon came to the decision to discard it.

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The quantity of material which surrounded one on all sides made walking difficult, while the narrow waist in the midst of this mass seemed to be unattached to the rest of the body. It was almost impossible to sit down without displacing the steel hoops. When ladies drove in their carriages to parties, to balls, or to the opera, not only had the greatest care to be taken not to crush the costly lace and flowers, the tulle and chiffon flounces, the bows and ribbons, but the coachman had to drive very carefully, in order to be sure to avoid any jolting. Gentlemen could take only a very modest position in the carriage, and had the greatest trouble in offering their arms to the hooped and bolstered beauty.

At the beginning of the Second Empire fashion remained much the same as in 1840, but skirts were more puffed out. Corsages à la *Vierge*, à la *Pompadour*, à la *Watteau*, were worn with trimmings of lace, velvet, flowers, and ribbon ruching, which had a very graceful effect. The varieties of colour and material were unlimited. The fashionable shades were called 'Teba,' 'mica yellow,' 'sun yellow,' 'cockchafer brown,' and 'faded rose,' while a very pale grey and green were also popular. For evening dresses the favourite material was an old-rose or old-blue *moiré* trimmed with silk fringes, real lace, or white ostrich feathers. The dresses were still not too wide, and were not yet overloaded with ornament. In the early years of the Second Empire the fashions resembled rather the styles of the Consulate. "Not," says Uzanne,

until the second period of the reign of Napoleon III did the terrible crinoline appear, to the astonishment of all Frenchwomen, who, no doubt, realized the absurdity of this incredible fashion.

Among the most striking and elegant women of the Empress's *entourage* was the Countess Castiglione, a beautiful Florentine. She had married Count Castiglione, chief of the Cabinet and First Equerry of King Victor Emmanuel, and, after ruining him, was divorced from him after scarcely two years of married life.



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Virginia di Castiglione came to the Court of Napoleon III on a kind of diplomatic mission. She was the mistress of Victor Emmanuel, and Cavour thought, not without good reason, that her provocative beauty and her reputation for gallantry would make a great impression on Napoleon III, who was very susceptible to feminine beauty. Countess Castiglione's task was to win the confidence of the French ministers with her intelligence, her clinging and at the same time domineering character, and to support Cavour's diplomatic relations with France. She was preceded by her reputation as an extremely fascinating woman. All the papers were full of her beauty, her worldly life, her caprices, and her extravagances. She had never loved her husband, and had consoled herself with many other men, one of the first of whom had been the King of Italy, although he was neither so young nor so good-looking as her husband and had nothing attractive in his manner toward women. But he was sensual and energetic, and the young Count Castiglione possessed neither of these qualities. In vain he surrounded his wife with the greatest luxury in his castle near Turin; in vain he plunged into the maddest extravagances in order to satisfy her whims and to make her life happy. All the reward he got from her was a cold indifference and a scornful smile. Victor Emmanuel, on the other hand, did not spoil her. He was not noted for either elegance or tact, and his character was the reverse of sociable, for he hated all festivities, and was bored to death at balls. Hunting, manœuvres, parades, and the coarser sensual pleasures were his only interests. His promiscuity was famous, and it was a popular proverb that "No monarch knew better than Victor Emmanuel how to make himself a father to his subjects." When he was a guest at the Court of Napoleon III he gave great amusement to the gentlemen by his coarse jokes and insinuations, and he brought blushes of shame to the cheeks of the ladies, who at that particular period were certainly not prudes. A very witty woman in the *entourage* of the Empress

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Eugénie, the Comtesse Damrémont, gives a delightful picture of the awkward importunities of this Italian soldier-king toward the young princesses and ladies of the Imperial Court. Incidentally, her remarks throw an interesting sidelight on the loose manners of the Court and the frivolous conversations which a gentleman could hold with a lady. In a letter to the French Ambassador Thouvenel she relates how Victor Emmanuel wished one day to pay the Empress Eugénie a compliment about her seductive person, and could think of nothing else to say than: "Your Majesty makes me suffer the tortures of Tantalus." And he told Princesse Mathilde point-blank that she attracted him extraordinarily: he would wish, therefore, to be received by her behind closed doors, for open doors disturbed him too much. On another occasion he saw in the *salon* a lady of the Court, Mme de Malaret, began a very loud conversation with her, and told her in the hearing of every one that he liked French women better than those of Turin because they did not wear drawers.

What sort of an impression could such a *galantuomo* make on women? The Countess Castiglione was not put out. He was a king—that was enough for her. And his remark about the French ladies was, as it happens, true. This piece of feminine *lingerie* had not, at this period, developed into an "erotic luxury," although it was adopted as a feminine fashion by distinguished society about the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly in England. But all women did not wear drawers. They were considered ungraceful, which was certainly, at that time, true of the long drawers reaching to the ankles and fastened closely round them. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that those delightfully coquettish and impudently dainty lace creations were worn by elegant women to enhance the charms of their bodies, and not until the twentieth century that (made of ever more diaphanous materials and growing shorter and shorter) they triumphantly proclaimed themselves the height of elegance. The dainty knickers of

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cotton, *crêpe de Chine*, or triple ninon of the modern woman bear, thank God! no resemblance to the narrow tubes so unbecoming to the female leg which the elegant women of the nineteenth century counted among their *lingerie*, and which the King of Italy remembered with so much displeasure.

When the Countess Castiglione came to Paris every one was extremely anxious to make the acquaintance of the Italian beauty. She elected to stay first with Count Walewski, Napoleon's Minister for Foreign Affairs, formerly Envoy Extraordinary at Florence, and was hardly established before the whole nobility of France called upon her. She was overwhelmed with invitations, and it happened that just then there was to be an official ball at the Tuileries, at which she was invited to appear. She could not have wished for a better setting for her first appearance in Parisian Court society.

She arrived intentionally very late in order to make a greater sensation. When she was announced the whole brilliant assembly was seized with such excited curiosity that, as the Countess entered the room, the dancing couples stood still and the music broke off. She was received with universal admiration. The Empress, who was dancing with the Emperor, went up to her and led her to a chair. The Emperor at once asked Duke Ernst of Saxe-Coburg to dance with the Empress, while he asked the Countess Castiglione to waltz with him, and whirled off with her to the strains of Strauss. All eyes were turned on the couple, and the young beauty's success was complete. Her appearance at Court was the event of the week, and every day the interesting stranger won more ground. She was quite conscious of her triumph. Her own person pre-occupied her unceasingly, especially when she knew that the eyes of men were on her. She always had something to put right, a curl to push into place, a loosened bow to fasten, the thousand flounces on her dress to straighten, to powder her face, to glance sideways at herself in the glass. "When she appeared in her miraculous *toilettes* amid a ballroom crowded

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with people they stood on chairs in order to admire her," says the Comtesse Stéphanie Tascher de la Pagerie. Once in London, which she visited for the Exhibition, she was so marvellously dressed at the opera that the people climbed on to their seats and on to the balconies in order to gaze at her in her box. Everything about her was perfect, from her dark hair to her dainty feet, which she kept as carefully as her slender hands. And she was completely herself, and imitated nothing and nobody. She was always dressed in an individual style, her one care being to enhance and beautify the gifts with which nature had so richly endowed her. Her perpetual changes of *coiffure* were famous, and she introduced the fashion of arranging long ostrich feathers like a wreath round the hair, a mode which made her look taller and gave her an appearance truly regal. Concerning her headdress, she even had a difference of opinion with the Empress, who was always more conservative in her clothes and in her *coiffures*.

The fashions in hairdressing between 1850 and 1870 would demand a chapter to themselves. In their excessive complication and in the use of artificial additions they almost equalled the towering edifices of the eighteenth century, except that false curls were not piled up so high, but were used mostly at the side and on the neck as a chignon. Nearly everything in the *coiffure* of the ladies of the Second Empire was artificial; but they were not necessarily so unsightly as the complaint of an otherwise excellently informed contemporary would lead one to expect:

Oh, the terrible *coiffures*, falling over the shoulders! They were, to use the cant phrase of the period, devilishly clever. But now, looked at from a distance, with our modern taste [*i.e.*, the taste of 1900], what a sight! Loose hair floated round their heads; for the most part it was false, stuck on, burned by potent bleaching materials and dyes, singed by curling tongs, dried up with ammonia. This dead, artificial hair, which appeared under their velvet toques as a chignon or in tight curls, was the most hideous thing in the world. No decadent epoch has ever given



FEMALE FIGURE
Oil-painting by P.-A. Renoir
About 1870

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us anything more grotesque. . . . Women seemed to take a delight in decking themselves out as caricatures . . . and the more disconnectedness, madness, and improbability a woman displayed in her clothes, the better chance she had to be proclaimed as a queen of fashion. . . . Women's faces, with plaits and tufts twirled up on the crowns of their heads, corkscrew curls hanging on their necks or over their shoulders, rows and rows of plaits, waved love-locks, and long fringes hanging almost into their eyes, no longer had that charm which only a natural *coiffure* can give. Everything was false, theatrical, without taste. Often, when they added to these coils or cascades of hair a small toque, shaped like a *bon-bon* box, and when they went about in their short dresses of screaming colours (sometimes the colours of a fashionable racing stable), with sunshades, jewels, and all sorts of watches and other pendants of gold, one is compelled to admit that these women all looked like dressed-up monkeys just let loose for a monkey masquerade.

This rather caustic commentator may be right from the standpoint of modern taste. But he forgets that every fashion, however ridiculous and however grotesque, however impractical and unbecoming, had a charm in its own period, and was once considered beautiful. And if one examines the gallery of beauties of the Second Empire it is impossible to say that they looked like "dressed-up monkeys." Countess Castiglione, moreover, was always a few years in advance of the fashion. She was not in favour of false curls or of the whalebone coats-of-mail and crinolines which a lady of the Second Empire considered necessary articles of her wardrobe. The corset, in which the woman of the period found so many erotic possibilities, played a very unimportant part with the Countess Castiglione. She had other means of making an effect on men, and needed for this purpose neither crinoline nor whalebone corset. As a rule she wore, as did many other elegant women, a horsehair pad on the hips, so that the dress was only slightly puffed out at the sides, from which it fell in soft folds. Her firm, well-formed breasts required no support. In the evening she wore low-cut dresses which exposed her shoulders,

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the whole of her back, and much of her bosom. This no doubt was approved and openly admired by men, but the women who could not accomplish such a low *décolleté* were scandalized. She selected delicate, soft, clinging materials, which showed off well the wonderful lines of her figure, and she wore a crinoline only when commanded to appear at Court.

Her lively imagination found its greatest opportunities at the masked costume balls so much in favour at that time. There she could display the contours of her body with complete freedom. On one occasion she appeared at one of the parties at Compiègne as Salammbo in a completely transparent muslin garment with nothing underneath but silk fleshings. Another time she appeared as the "Queen of Hearts." Her dark hair fell loosely over her almost naked body down to her knees. Hearts were introduced all over her costume; there was even one below her girdle. When the Empress Eugénie complimented her on this original costume she said, somewhat ironically: "The heart has slipped rather low." For a long time in Court circles this daring costume of the beautiful Countess was the subject of unending gossip. The sharp-tongued Viel-Castel says:

Yesterday evening there was an agreeable costume ball at the Foreign Minister's. The Emperor was there in a domino, and had great fun with his incognito. But his slow, awkward gait and his habit of pulling at his moustache while speaking made him easily recognizable. The Countess Castiglione, whom every one says is very intimate with the Emperor, had chosen the most fantastic and most daring costume that can be imagined. The style of the costume was half Louis XV, half modern, and represented "The Queen of Hearts"! The skirts, which hung apron-wise over the petticoat, and the little bodice were hung with chains made of large hearts. The Countess's wonderful hair rippled over her temples and brow, and fell in cascades over her neck and shoulders. The costume, gleaming with gold, was magnificent. Several well-meaning old fools admired the Countess's talent in being able to pay for such luxuries with her 50,000 francs

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income, but the better-informed whispered: "There is no God but the Emperor, and the Castiglione is his prophet." The elegance and beauty of the Countess aroused fierce envy among the women, but the men contented themselves with envying the Emperor his good fortune in the possession of such a mistress. The Countess herself showed a complete absence of embarrassment, and seemed quite unaware of the shocked surprise her costume was causing. One could really hardly say that she was *décolleté*. One could only certify to the nakedness of her bosom, which was quite inadequately veiled with a flimsy scarf. The eye could follow the outline and the smallest details, and the part which the veil left completely in the lurch stretched almost to the waist.

The proud Countess wore no corsets. She would willingly stand as model to a Phidias—if one could be found nowadays—clothed in nothing but her beauty. Her bosom is truly worthy of admiration. Her breasts spring up proudly without a wrinkle, like those of young Moorish girls, and these two hemispheres seem to throw out a challenge to the whole world of women. The Castiglione is a courtesan in the style of Aspasia, proud of her beauty, which she only veils just so much as is necessary to enable her to be admitted to a *salon*. A gentleman said to her yesterday, as he was staring at her uncovered bosom: "Beware, Countess, of those two proud rebels in your corsage. Very soon the men will throw off their clothes."

That was more than bold, but it did not displease the Countess Castiglione. The ladies of the Second Empire were used to a loose tone in conversation.

Less display and less arrogance would have sufficed to inflame the senses of Napoleon III. Countess Castiglione's beauty alone would have enslaved him, and, although she defends herself in lively language against ever having given the Empress cause for jealousy, she was in reality not so discreet, and it is impossible not to conclude that her friendship with Napoleon III was a fairly intimate one. "My mother was stupid," she said once to a friend. "If, instead of marrying me to Castiglione, she had sent me to France a few years earlier, there would not be a Spanish woman but an Italian reigning now in the Tuileries."

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Writing to Luigi Cibrario, the Italian Foreign Minister, Cavour remarks :

A beautiful Countess has been brought into Piedmontese diplomacy. I have dared her to flirt with the Emperor and, if necessary, to seduce him. If she is successful I have promised her I will appoint her brother to the post of secretary to the Embassy in Petersburg. Yesterday, at a concert in the Tuileries, she began quite secretly to play her part.

And at Compiègne the charming Nicchia, as her friends called her, seems to have continued this part and played it out to the end. She herself wrote later, at the end of her days, on the margin of her will, that she wished to wear as a shroud the lace-trimmed night-gown that she had worn once at Compiègne on that night in 1857 when Napoleon III first invited her secretly to the palace.

It was not the first time that the fate of France had depended on a woman's garter or on an even more intimate garment, and, although it cannot be said with certainty how far the Countess Castiglione influenced the politics of the French Emperor, we are at least certain of the sway which she exercised over his heart and senses. He visited her frequently in her house, which was in a very secluded position in the Rue de la Pompe. This house had two exits—one of them a secret spiral staircase. The whole building seemed to have been expressly designed for a tender rendezvous. A soft knock or a ring! A little window in the entrance door would be cautiously opened. "Who is there? The Emperor!" A faint ray of light would indicate the way to the Countess's boudoir. This the Imperial visitor would follow, and after two or three hours, with the same ceremony, he would leave the house of his friend, as mysteriously as he had come.

As a rule Napoleon did not talk about his personal experiences, although he was not exactly discreet about his past gallantries. All the young women at his Court had set their caps at him at one time or another, and it was usually fairly



THE BATH
*Charcoal drawing by H.-G.-E. Degas
About 1890*

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easy to know which was his favourite of the moment. But private visits to a mistress such as the Countess Castiglione were kept strictly secret. Usually on these excursions he was accompanied at a certain distance by a member of the secret police, whose duty it was to guard his person. Nevertheless, he often placed himself in dangerous positions, and once after a rendezvous with the Countess Castiglione he was very nearly murdered. He had gone to visit her incognito in his little *coupé*, without a lackey, accompanied only by his private coachman, and was on his way home at three o'clock in the morning. When the carriage had just left the Countess's house the Emperor was suddenly attacked by three armed men. The coachman, however, whipped up his horses, and they galloped away at a terrific speed, throwing the three assailants to the ground, so that the Emperor reached the Tuileries unharmed.

When the Countess moved into her house in the Rue de Castiglione Napoleon III visited her there also. Her private apartments had a mechanical contrivance, a sort of revolving door, which completely hid anyone entering from the sight of curious eyes. Thus the Emperor, when he appeared at his mistress's house, could not be seen by chance witnesses, nor could the other admirers who visited her in large numbers, for her heart and her senses were never unoccupied. She had many lovers, and everybody knew this except the Emperor. A whim, a desire, perhaps simply the craving for variety, made her whirl from one adventure to another, adventures which lasted sometimes for a single night, or even for a few hours of intoxication. She did not always give love for love and passion for passion; many had to buy the favour of the beautiful, capricious woman with solid cash. Prince Napoleon told his sister the Princesse Mathilde that the rich Lord Hertford had bought the privilege of passing a night with the wild Countess for a million francs. Hertford himself had told him this, and shown him a receipt from the Castiglione which he had insisted on having. He was a great gentleman, this Lord

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Hertford! But it appears that at Court these escapades of the lovely Nicchia were not taken amiss; she had conquered the Emperor's *entourage* as well as himself, and even the Empress Eugénie, who did not exactly love her, received her at her Monday at-homes. The Princesse Mathilde was very fond of her, and invited her to all her *soirées*, dinners, and concerts.

People accepted the Countess Castiglione just as she was, with her foreign charm, her extravagances, her loose behaviour, her eccentric *toilettes*. The unexpected outbursts of her temperament (for she was always ready to astonish onlookers in some way or another), although they offended many, spread among others the legend of her seduction. If the fancy seized her she would disappear suddenly from some festivity in order to escape from her crowds of admirers. And if the guests asked, "Where can she have disappeared to?" she would suddenly appear again, as though by magic, in a quite different dress, decked with flowers and diamonds, even more provocative and fascinating and a thousand times more envied by women than before.

Her eccentric whims were a daily topic of conversation in Paris. One day she conceived the idea of having the walls of her *salon* and her bedroom entirely covered with black silk, like one of the *grandes cocottes*, and of having her furniture and her bed covered with black taffeta. Then she received a few of her admirers in these apartments, she herself clad in a dainty, transparent muslin dress, without flowers or diamonds. The contrast was dazzling, and had the effect she wished. For days this new caprice of the Countess Castiglione was talked of.

Another time, in the winter, when she was taking tea in her *salon* with her new favourite Nieuwerkerke, whom she was planning to steal from Princesse Mathilde, the idea struck her to make a rendezvous with him on Christmas Eve on the roof of the Louvre in order to listen to the Christmas bells at midnight. Nieuwerkerke, who was Director of Fine Arts, loved extravagances of this kind, and agreed. She was punctually at

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the appointed place, and at midnight the Parisians could see her walking in the moonlight with the Director on the roof of the Louvre.

She played many other such pranks, as her former husband knew only too well. One day he wished that she should visit his mother, whom she hated like the plague, and, as she would not go, he was compelled to force her to get into the carriage. She gave in, but when they were driving over a bridge she suddenly took her shoes off and threw them into the river. "Now," said she to her husband, "you cannot take me with you to your mother's, for I cannot appear before her in my stockinged feet." She had her way.

The cult of her own physical beauty did not even leave her in the sickroom. Dr Arnal, an old and worthy gentleman, was her family doctor and that of the Empress also. One day the Countess Castiglione, when she was staying at Le Havre for a holiday, felt seriously ill, and immediately sent for the famous physician from Paris. He set off in a great hurry, and went at once to the hotel where the Countess was staying; but, to his astonishment, he was not admitted. He was asked to come back again. This he did, but was again sent away, with the words that the Countess was not yet in a condition to receive a visit from him. Hour after hour went by. At last he was allowed to see the invalid who had been in such haste to call him from Paris, but, although he had arrived at nine o'clock, had not permitted him to enter her sickroom until two. An amazing sight met his eyes. The room was filled with the most wonderful flowers, the whole of the floor, the bed, the chairs, the sofa, were strewn with roses, and the sick woman herself lay in the midst of her lace-trimmed silk pillows, pale and shaken with fever, but with diamonds in her hair, on her arms, and round her neck. The preparations for this reception had taken hours, and yet she certainly had no intention of attempting to seduce the old and anything but desirable man. It was merely a whim of the capricious lady to display herself

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in the eyes of the doctor as an interesting and beautiful patient. Her reputation for beauty and elegance could not be allowed to lapse even on a sickbed.

Old age overtook her sooner than she expected. Her incomparable physical beauty left her, although not all in a moment, for even after the collapse of the Second Empire, in the year 1871, she was still a fairly beautiful woman, although the height of her glory was past. At the age of thirty-five she was already only a shadow of what she had been. Italian women age early. She had hoped, like Ninon de Lenclos, to be able to cheat the years and arrest the decline of her beauty, but she deceived herself. Her wonderful brown hair became prematurely grey and thin, her pearly teeth decayed, her figure took on curves which destroyed its classic lines, the charming oval of her face was disfigured by a double chin. More than any other woman she had reason to bemoan the signs of approaching age, and time was merciless to her. The once beautiful woman could not bear to be deposed by younger women from her position as the lioness of the *salon*, and she resolved to withdraw entirely from the world. She shut herself up in her house. She could not endure the thought that every day she, who yesterday had been all-conquering, must sacrifice yet a little more of her beauty, and that she was powerless against the decay of the ideal feminine type which she had incorporated. No cosmetics could hide the fact that her part was played out. She did not want to suffer the experience of other ageing beauties: to have the eyes of men and women cruelly and ironically observing the advance of her physical decay. She retired, and in the confusion of Society was almost forgotten. From time to time Paris recalled her extravagances and her miraculous elegance, but at last even that shadowy fame was denied her, and she died in obscurity in an age which had forgotten her name.

In her extravagance the lovely Nicchia was only equalled at the French Court by the Countess Pauline Metternich. Like



FIN DE SIÈCLE
Chalk drawing by Henri Boutet
ALBERT & CO.

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the Castiglione, she was a foreigner ; she was a Viennese, and possessed the gay temperament and the great adaptability of her countrymen. From her very first day at Court she realized the nature of the spirit which ruled the society in which she was to live, a *milieu* of care-free youth, of frivolity, of luxury, and of extravagance. It suited her admirably, and she gave full vent to her temperament. From the very beginning she adapted herself to the tone which was prevalent in this frivolous society, so that very soon she was its leader, and surpassed every one else in wit and high spirits. She always had a crowd of young men and women around her. Everything she did was the vogue. The elegance of her dress, the individuality of her character, her witty answers, the *bons mots* which fell from her lips every moment—all became fashionable. Nothing she did passed unnoticed. On the promenades and the boulevards the carriage of the Austrian Ambassador's young wife, with its six thoroughbreds, was as well known as that of the Empress herself. She was the arbiter of fashion, the *maîtresse de plaisir* of every Society gathering. Her youth, her gaiety, her good taste, her social gifts—all predestined her to a position apart. She was, it is true, not beautiful. Viel-Castel calls her actually ugly, but her whole personality was surrounded by an irresistible charm of freshness and spontaneity, and she knew how to display herself in the most advantageous light. Her large dark eyes and her fair hair gave her mobile and clever face something very piquant, and, with all her liveliness, she had a very distinguished and aristocratic bearing. In her movements there was that worldly nonchalance which only birth and the right upbringing can give. She did not, like some of her contemporaries, affect the manners of women of the street, but she was sufficiently eccentric for those times, none the less. She smoked continually, and liked to drink a glass of champagne in the company of men, which still more enlivened her sparkling intellect. In Paris and at Compiègne she organized nearly all the theatrical performances, and was always full

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of new ideas for these productions. Viel-Castel wrote in December 1863 :

The Court is enjoying itself at Compiègne. . . . The Comtesse de la Pagerie is arranging living pictures, as she does every year. The young people are busy with charades, and Countess Metternich, that little mercurial horror, is arranging ballroom dances.

The ladies of the Second Empire were deeply interested in spiritualism. The political life of France and the world troubled them very little, but their indifference to politics, says a contemporary, "gave them all the more time for table-turning. It is at the moment the only preoccupation of the Parisians." In all the *salons* of the lionesses of the Second Empire spiritualistic *séances* took place—formal gatherings with specially printed invitations. A society of spiritualists was formed. The members met together in a hired room in the Palais-Royal, and even had their own journal. Many elegant ladies of the Court and high nobility were seized with a veritable fever for table-turning and spirit-raising, and anyone who had aspirations to worldly distinction had at least once a month to get into communication with the dead. Even the coquettes of the period could not hold themselves aloof from this fashionable whim, and the spiritualistic parties of Princess Metternich in the Rue de Varenne soon became the most sought after in Parisian Society. She was the most successful hostess of the day, and her house had always been much frequented, particularly for her musical evenings and dance *soirées*. Prince Richard Metternich was himself very musical, and he was also the best waltzer at Court. In his house excellent German music was to be heard—above all, the charming songs of the great German composers—and it was his wife who, with the co-operation of the Empress, induced Napoleon III to allow the first Wagner production in Paris. Unfortunately *Tannhäuser* was anything but a success, and Princess Metternich had to bear the brunt of the Parisians' ridicule. It is said that

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in her rage and fury at the failure of the opera she broke her valuable fan into a thousand pieces. She even had to endure mockery of Wagner's opera in her own house. One of the *habitués* of her *salon*, M. de Bayens, conceived the notion one evening, when Society had as usual gathered at the Metternichs', of giving a comic parody of *Tannhäuser* on the Countess's small private stage, without his hostess having any idea of what the performance was to be. He had had marionettes cut out of cardboard for this purpose, and before the curtain rose one of the ladies present, dressed up as an attendant, distributed gratis among the elegant onlookers cheap little fans with the remark: "For the sake of economy, in case the ladies present should wish to break their fans." The stage depicted the hunting scene from *Tannhäuser*, but with plump *dachshunds* instead of hounds: the Wartburg was replaced by Schloss Johannisberg, which, with its rich vineyards, belonged to Prince Metternich. The hero, Tannhäuser, was imprisoned not in the Venusberg, but in a wine cellar, where he sat enjoying himself with a bottle of Johannisberger.

This bad joke was rapturously received, and there was no more talk of Wagner and his music in the *salon* of Countess Metternich for a very long time.

She was more successful in her influence on the reform of fashion. She declared war on the long crinoline, and introduced the short, wide, graceful puffed skirt. These becoming short dresses were much worn at balls and evening parties, and, when the ladies waltzed, many a pretty leg and elegant garter was to be seen. Many carried their extravagance to such a degree that their skirts came only to just below the knee. The new fashion produced a veritable revolution among the Parisian dressmakers, and the celebrated Worth, who had opened his *atelier* and his *salons* in Paris in the year 1858, won fame and riches through Princess Metternich. He was a very skilful dress artist, and he was nicknamed "Faune des Toilettes," because with his strong masculine hands he crushed and

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crumpled and tweaked at the delicate materials and dainty lace, and succeeded none the less in producing an exquisite work of art. Princess Metternich made him the autocrat of fashion and taste, and all the worldly followers of elegance went to the Rue de la Paix to benefit by his advice.

There were, however, two rival camps which fought for the mastery of fashion. The one supported the short skirt which left the feet free, the other the more proper princess dress with its yard-long train. But one thing they accomplished in common: the final abolition of the crinoline. "It is a remarkable fact," says Uzanne,

that the great French male dressmaker is no older than the Second Empire. Until 1850 women were dressed only by women, and the *modistes* which are to be seen in the graceful engravings of the eighteenth century remained in vogue for a long time. They still exist, for there are very great *modistes* even to-day. But the male dressmaker has become the master, the almighty arbiter over the *toilettes* of fine ladies. These men are, or were, admirable artists. The aristocratic grace with which Watteau and Gainsborough invested the charming and elegant Frenchwomen and Englishwomen of the eighteenth century has been rivalled by even greater artists,¹ such as Sargent, Shannon, Jacques-Émile Blanche, Albert Besnard, Boldini, and many others, but, side by side with these masters of the palette, the great Parisian dressmakers have become, as it were, collaborators of the portrait-painters, in so far as they dress our contemporaries with a taste, a delicacy of colour and drapery which make these pictures wholly charming.

Michelet is right when he remarks:

Most crafts which require a long time to master are branches of art. Thus the craft of dressmaking is very near to sculpture. For a *couturier* who understands nature, and imitates and amends her, I would gladly give three classical sculptors.

Charles Blanc too, in an original work on the art of decora-

¹ A strange judgment on the part of Uzanne. We should not now place Sargent and Shannon above Gainsborough, nor Besnard and Boldini above Watteau.—TRANSLATOR.



THE TOILET-TABLE
Colour etching by H. Kalmár

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tion and dress, discusses the universal laws of decorative art, and declares that decoration in the form of dress and jewellery is by no means a subject for superficial consideration, but offers to the philosopher a clue to social history and an infallible guide to prevailing ideas.

When, owing to political events, Princess Metternich was no longer able to live in Paris and had once more taken up her residence in Vienna, her temperament was somewhat quelled by the stiffer etiquette at the Court of the Emperor Francis Joseph. Indeed, she met with active opposition in the immediate *entourage* of the Empress Elizabeth. People were scandalized by the too Parisian reputation of the gay ex-Ambadress. And yet in Vienna too she was popular from the first day of her appearance there, and it was not without a certain displeasure that the Emperor of Austria observed, when driving out, that the acclamations of the people were directed far more to the Princess Metternich than to the Empress, his wife.

Even tragic events could not rob her Viennese gaiety of its *élan*. With renewed eagerness she set herself to create her own circle in Vienna as she had done in Paris, a circle of poets, artists, and eminent men and women, young and old, among whom she was always the leader. She was the same as she had been at Compiègne and in Paris: always delighted with anything new, anything that promised entertainment and pleasure. She organized blue, white, and red masquerades, as well as fancy balls and charity bazaars, at which she herself appeared. On the following day the papers would be full of reports of her great social gifts, her good taste, and her wonderful *toilettes*, which always had something new and original about them. She had an amazing histrionic gift, and would certainly have been a great actress if Fate had not given her a coronet. She loved the theatre above everything, and played every variety of *rôle* with distinction, often in company with famous artists, every one declaring that she possessed a quite

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remarkable gift and had nothing of the amateur about her. She threw herself completely into her parts, and played with an ardour and abandon which professional actresses might envy. In Paris acting had been her leading passion. She never refused to take a part, even if it were only a silent walk-on. She posed with great success in living pictures with a few beautiful women of her own circle. She was a princess by birth and education, but an artist and musician by choice and temperament.

In this world of show, elegance, intrigue, and pleasure one could mention many other elegant and delightful women, who all belonged to Eugénie's circle, enlivening it with their charm, their extravagance, or their provocative grace. One of these was Comtesse de Cannissy, little "Casinette" as she was called on account of her attractive, sweet personality, whose memory was long fragrant among her friends. Others were Sophie de Castellane, Mme Lehon, Countess Walewska, a Florentine almost as beautiful as the Countess Castiglione, Comtesse de Loynes, a temperamental and witty woman and a generous patroness to every kind of budding talent, and the blonde Marquise de Galliffet, whose husband was taken prisoner in Germany. Others, again, like the Duchesse de Mouchy, were admired—and envied—for their outstanding taste in dress and their wonderful jewellery. In the year 1869 the Duchesse appeared at a ball in the palace at Beauvais wearing diamonds worth nearly two million francs. Her dress of white chiffon had a long train embroidered all over in silver, and from the shoulders, over the skirt trimmed with many flounces, hung a wide shawl embroidered with flowers and silver leaves. "The ladies of the Second Empire," writes Arsène Houssaye in his *Confessions*,

were dazzling stars. All were lovely, all were charming, and all were witty—more or less. Who could doubt it if I were to mention the names of the Duchesse de Mouchy, the Comtesse de Salucy, the Baronne de Vatry, the Countess Walewska, the



IN PYJAMAS
Colour etching by Max Brüning
About 1912

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Duchesse de Persigny, the Countess Moltke, Mme Bartholoni, the Comtesse de Pourtalès, the Princess Poniatowska, etc., etc. The Court festivities and social entertainments organized by these women have become legendary, and it was not astonishing to hear every one say: "The Empire is enjoying itself."

Mme de Pourtalès enjoyed the reputation of being a particularly elegant woman, and shared with the Princess Metternich the rôle of *maîtresse de plaisir* at Court. Pauline Metternich invented something new every day, in order to satisfy the craving of other women for variety in entertainment, and Mme de Pourtalès followed in her footsteps. She was most ingenious in the invention of new jokes and of pranks to make people laugh, and even founded a "Jokers' Club" for the gay and idle young who needed an outlet for their superfluous high spirits. This club was popularly supposed to be an excuse for revel and debauchery, but in reality was merely a harmless social club, from which all melancholy was banned. Its pranks were innocuous, if silly, as the following story may prove.

A reception was announced at the mansion of the Comte and Comtesse de Pourtalès in the Rue de Tronchin, and a number of official personages were invited. All the lustres and candelabra were alight. A long row of carriages was drawn up in the courtyard and in the street in front of the house, and new carriages were perpetually joining the throng. On either side of the staircase of the palace lackeys stood on every step in short scarlet knee-breeches and white-powdered wigs. As soon as a guest arrived the servant on the lowest step called out the name of the arrival to his neighbour. And so it was passed on until it reached the major-domo, who, throwing open the double doors of the *salon*, called out the name. Now it happened at this reception that the most illustrious and famous names were garbled by the lackeys on the steps before they came to the top. Thus, instead of Count Walewski, "Count Walezowski" was announced, and the Minister, hearing his

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name garbled in this way, could not refrain from protesting in a low voice to the lady of the house. "Yes," said Mme de Pourtalès, smiling, "your Excellency must be a little indulgent. All our servants are new, and have not yet got accustomed to the people who frequent our house." Suddenly Princess Metternich strode furiously into the room. She had just been announced as "Mme Materna," and, in addition, a clumsy lackey had torn from her shoulders her costly cloak, which had not long since arrived from Worth's. She was not in the habit of mincing words. She did not, therefore, restrain her feelings, but called out to her friend, without embarrassment, in front of all the guests: "For heaven's sake, my dear, what has happened to your servants? What impossible people have you surrounded yourself with?" Mme de Pourtalès made renewed excuses. Meanwhile all the guests had arrived and were moving toward supper. The folding doors of the dining-room were opened wide. But what a surprise for the guests! At the table sat the lackeys in red knee-breeches and powdered wigs, already enjoying the food. There was universal indignation among the guests until they realized that the gentlemen in livery were the Marquis of this, the Duke of that, Count something else, etc. All the male members of the "Jokers' Club" had dressed up as lackeys.

The joke was a huge success, and the dinner proceeded merrily and without ceremony. This is a fair sample of the more harmless kind of practical joke as practised under Napoleon III.

Less harmless were the numerous gaming clubs which were opened everywhere during the Second Empire. Every other month a secret gaming hell was closed down by the police, but others were started immediately. In the fashionable *salon* of a Marquis du Hallay or of a Mme de Hauteville high stakes were played for, and every opportunity was offered to old and young to ruin themselves. Even young girls were slaves to gambling, and if they themselves had no money to lose they

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ran up gambling debts, which their fathers or their admirers had to pay ! Mme de Hauteville's daughter by the rich diamond merchant Moyonat was a confirmed gambler, and frequently lost or won immense sums.

The turf played a great part in social life, and the results of the Grand Prix de Longchamp were awaited eagerly. The racing itself was by no means the chief interest—at any rate, for the ladies. At Longchamp the most eccentric *toilettes* would be admired—and criticized. Only clothes of the latest fashion were worn, and only the smartest and most up-to-date carriages appeared. The beauties of the aristocracy, actresses, and elegant *demi-mondaines*—the whole fashionable world—displayed themselves on the racecourse with a luxury and an ostentation which even Paris, in its most extravagant period, had never experienced. Those who had money to lose could apply to the totalizer ; those who had more and were even more anxious to lose it had only to apply to the ladies.

CHAPTER XIII

DEMI-MONDE AND DEMI-CASTORS

THE Second Empire period, in which great Society women were so much in evidence, gave birth also to the real *demi-mondaine*. The name itself now came into use for the first time, applied to the famous *cocottes* and women of doubtful reputation who filled Paris with their extravagant elegance and their scandalous life. They appeared with their hair dyed bright red *à la Phryné*. Their cheeks were brilliantly rouged, their faces white with powder, their eyes far too much blackened, and many of them attached long artificial lashes to their eyelids. They were to be seen in public as highly 'made up' as actresses on the stage, or, rather, as film stars in the studio.

Between the woman of Society and the *demi-mondaine* there was another type of woman, to whom the name of 'demi-castor' was given. She had the pretensions and manners of the former and the free morality of the latter, her frank sensuality, her calculation and entire lack of prejudice. These demi-castors were to be seen everywhere. They frequented the balls at the Opéra, the social routs, particularly those of Arsène Houssaye, famous for their debauchery. Wherever elegant men of the world were to be found the demi-castors were to be found also. They helped the dandies to waste their substance, and were often greater vampires than the real courtesans. But they always retained their connexions with the Society to which they belonged, either by birth or by the position of their husbands. They lived a life of extreme activity, changed their lovers as often as their clothes, and were as well known in the world of the turf and of the gambling



THE DEMON OF COQUETRY

Colour etching by Filicien Rops

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clubs as the famous *cocottes*. But outward appearances of respectability were preserved, and men visited them only in secret. "Volumes could be written about the secret societies founded by these ladies," says a contemporary.

They were gifted with extraordinary imagination. In some remote district they possessed a "Tour de Nesle," where scenes were enacted worthy of the women of the Roman decadence. They had no rivals in the art of stimulating desire and satisfying sensual love.

These women were, as a rule, extremely seductive, yet their sensuality was almost entirely cerebral, intellectual, and cold. They liked to imitate the free manners of real prostitutes, and when they were not actually in good society spoke the grossest slang of the boulevards. At Spa, Baden-Baden, Biarritz, Plombières, Eaux-Bonnes, and the famous resorts of Dieppe and Trouville, already very fashionable, they sat at the gaming tables dressed as conspicuously as *cocottes*, and squandered the fortunes of their admirers. According to Uzanne, these fashionable resorts where elegant Society ladies and Bohemian adventuresses forgathered were the centre of an unlimited luxury. There were no bounds to their expenditure on their clothes and their caprices: a positive fury of extravagance, an orgy of spending, seemed to possess them all. Everything was subordinated to the purposes of ostentation, and even the less reputable places of amusement were filled with women in dresses of silk brocade, dresses of corded silk covered in gold or silver sequins, little coats, called *casaquins*, trimmed with rich embroidery, expensive shawls, Arabian burnouses with diamond buckles, gold-embroidered tarlatan, lace with fringes of real gold, not to mention the jewels, medallions, brooches, pendants, and necklaces of Oriental pearls.

The queen of the demi-castors or *cocodettes* of the Second Empire, the most luxurious and licentious of all the reigning priestesses of love, was the famous and notorious Païva. She was a Russian by birth, and for a long time the lover of the

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pianist Herz. Afterward she was the mistress of the Duc de Guiche, who was later Duc de Gramont, and of a great many other more or less noble lovers. Eventually her amazing beauty and her skill in seduction succeeded in subduing the Marquis Païva, a young Portuguese, who fell so madly in love with her that he married her. Viel-Castel is so well informed as to her private life that one must conclude that he too was one of her lovers, or, at least, one of her casual visitors. He writes about this *grande cocodette* of the Second Empire (as famous in her way as the Countess Castiglione) as follows :

On the morning after her marriage, when her newly wed husband awoke, Mme Païva addressed him more or less in the following words : "You have given me your name, and last night I paid my debt. I played the part of an honourable woman because I wanted a position in Society, and I have got it. But you, sir, you have a *cocotte* for a wife. You can introduce her to no one, you can receive no one. We must therefore part. You can go back to Portugal. I—I shall remain here with your name and my own reputation." The young Marquis, ashamed and perplexed, followed her advice, and buried the memory of his adventure in a castle in Portugal.

The ex-Mme Herz, now Païva, could not live the life of her dreams with the miserable income allowed to her by her husband. She set herself therefore to find a rich and generous prince on whom she could draw for supplies. This Prince—or Count or Duke—she met while travelling, and she followed him to Constantinople, to Petersburg, to Naples, to Paris. Wherever he went the Prince always found her before him surrounded by extravagant luxury, dazzling him with a strange licentious beauty. Païva appeared to be entirely unconscious of the Prince's presence, and one day the change she had anticipated took place. It was no longer she who pursued the mortal destined for her, but he who pursued her.

He was so terribly in love that he came to her, not to offer her his hand—Païva would not have known what to do if he had—but his property. "I have an income of three millions," he said. "If you will live with me we will share it." Païva, who had expended three hundred thousand francs to win him, accepted, in order to recover her expenditure.

Thus the cruel Viel-Castel speaks of the beautiful and rich *demi-mondaine* who set all Paris agog with her luxury and extravagance. She possessed one of the most beautiful and elegant houses in the capital. She gave choice dinners. Her *salon* was famous and frequented. Many important artists and *littérateurs* visited her, and her conversation was considered to be as intelligent as that of any of her guests. She was witty and quick at repartee. Arsène Houssaye, who knew her, said to her once: "Love taught you to speak French." Whereupon she replied, very aptly: "No, it was French that taught me to make love."

She had a palace built for her in the Champs-Élysées by the architect Mangin, which is still shown to visitors. Even before it was furnished it had swallowed up one and a half million francs, and the furniture cost an equal amount. When she appeared in Society she wore on her person jewels worth two million francs, mostly diamonds and pearls. Her lovers showered wealth upon her; but she was only to be won by the richest and most generous. She never gave herself to a man out of caprice or sensuality or because she liked him. Money always played the chief part in her choice. Yet she was always surrounded by languishing admirers, perhaps because she sold herself so dearly and made it so difficult for a man to win her. One of her admirers once lost patience, and told her point-blank that she only sold her love for money. This did not perturb her in the least; she admitted it frankly, saying that she loved money and could never get enough, although she had more than he had himself. He was a poor aristocrat who had an income of only 30,000 francs. Nothing to a Païva! Yet she still tried to squeeze as much money out of him as possible. But as he had none he could not win her. "Have you ten thousand francs?" she asked him one day? "No." Whereupon she replied: "It is just as well you said that, for if you had admitted to owning ten thousand francs I should have demanded twenty thousand of you. But as you have not even

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ten thousand—well—bring me the money when you are in a position to do so. We will burn it, and I will be yours so long as the fire lasts.” The lover went away without answering a word.

A few days later the young cavalier turned up again. Païva received him in her boudoir, lying on a divan. Beside her stood a marble *guéridon* on which was a silver candlestick as on an altar. The room was drenched in sweet perfumes, and she herself was dressed in a very seductive *négligé*. Subdued daylight filtered through the silk curtains.

The young man held triumphantly in his hand ten thousand-franc notes, and threw himself at the feet of the woman he worshipped. Païva took the notes and laid them all round the candle, so that they would slowly burn one after the other. Then she fulfilled the young man’s long-cherished wish. The notes were burned, and Païva rose from her couch to gloat over the despair of the poor lover who had sacrificed a fortune for a short moment of her favour. But he smiled even more ironically than she, and triumph and revenge were mirrored in his eyes: “My dear child,” said he, “it is you who have been cheated, not I. You have fallen into a trap. The notes were so marvellously photographed by a friend of mine that even you were deceived.”

But this was probably the only deception in regard to money that she ever had to suffer from a man. As a rule she had a constant supply of admirers who put wealth at her disposal, as, for example, the young German nobleman who bought for two million francs the beautiful castle and estate of Pontchartrain and presented it to the divine Païva. She was probably one of the richest among the demi-castors of the Second Empire in Paris. Her income from the property which she had invested in Government bonds was more than two million francs. “The alcove of Païva,” says Viel-Castel, “hides mysteries which alone could provide the key to this prosperity of vice.”

Another very elegant woman who lived her life half in



THE MODERN WOMAN
Colour lithograph by Ernst Deutsch
Vienna. 1917

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Society and half in the *demi-monde* was the famous Mme Musard, who more than once provided copy for the *Chronique scandaleuse*. She too was not French by birth, but a native of South America. Her husband, the well-known musical conductor Musard, had discovered her there and married her. She came to Paris with him, and soon after began her extraordinary career. On a visit to Baden-Baden, then very fashionable, she encountered the King of Holland. Completely captivated by her charm, her intelligence, and her assured and elegant bearing, he knew no better way of proving his love for her than to press into her hand a thick wad of South American mining shares. It is true they were very much below par at the time, because the mine in question was involved in a shady lawsuit, and its future was very uncertain. Mme Musard went to Paris with her little treasure and, after many difficulties, found a lawyer who undertook to handle the case on condition that if he were successful he should share the profits with his client. The case was won. The royal shares rose to a phenomenal value, and the happy owner of the script became all at once an exceedingly rich woman. She furnished herself a palace in the Avenue d'Iéna, bought a castle near Le Havre, owned a box at the opera, received the whole of Paris, and lived the brilliant and extravagant life of a woman of fashion. She was particularly famed for her unusually luxurious and splendid carriages. She possessed among others a barouche which could be rivalled only by the carriage of the Empress. Her coachman was the famous English-trained Charlie, who had once served Lord Pembroke in London, and whom she had coaxed away from a high personage of the Imperial Court. The life of this elegant and extravagant demi-castor, who was of simple *bourgeois* origin, resembles a story from *The Arabian Nights*. Her end, however, was unfortunate. On one of the many hunting expeditions which she organized at her castle she met with an accident. Through the carelessness of one of the hunters she received the shot which was

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intended for the game, full in the face. Though still young she was permanently disfigured, and had to give up her gallant and worldly life. She retired from the world altogether, and lived in the midst of her wealth, surrounded by marvellous treasures of art in which she no longer took any pleasure, lonely, forgotten, and unknown.

The careers of the great courtesans and demi-castors of the period were full of vicissitudes, and the careers of their admirers too. Particularly between the years 1860 and 1870 many fortunes were sacrificed for these women, for the *grisette* was out of fashion, and more modest *demi-mondaines* did not minister sufficiently to the vanity of the pampered clubmen and rich industrial magnates. The famous *cocottes* monopolized the success; they attracted all the riches, all the luxury and extravagance, to themselves. The elegant *demi-mondaines* were in a class of their own, and often led a more brilliant life than many of the most famous ladies of high society, with this exception—that, except in the elegant resorts and gambling hells, they never came into contact with ladies of the *vrai monde*. The situation was no longer the same as it had been under the Directory, when courtesans danced at public balls side by side with the elegant ladies of Society. The *grande cocotte* of the Second Empire lived in her own circle, but the men of her *entourage* belonged to the highest classes.

Every luxury and refinement of taste possible to the period was expended on the mansion of the *grande cocotte*. According to Zed, in his *Le Demi-monde sous le Second Empire* :

Everything in it was lavish and opulent, yet at the same time there was a carefulness in the choice of the most intimate details and accessories, a sybaritic elegance, which beggars description. Everything appeared to be arranged and prepared to attract men, particularly for the distinguished, excessively self-indulgent men who visited it. The tea-gowns, the elegant *déshabillés*, the fresh, snow-white underwear, the whirl of lace, silk, and muslin, the luxury of *lingerie*, and all the accessories of the toilet were enough to make one tremble with delight.

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This whole apparatus of attraction, this choice seasoning and coquettish garnishing, which has long been vulgarized, was at that period the exclusive property of these women. They had discovered them and brought them to the highest point of perfection. They handled these things with an art, a science, an amazing *mise en scène*, and became thereby desirable and charming to a degree which the women of Society, even the most self-conscious and coquettish, could not even approach with all their charms.

All the *cocottes* of any reputation dressed at Worth's, then the greatest of the fashionable dressmakers, the arbiter of feminine elegance, the despotic, capricious ruler of costume during the Second Empire. And, strange to say, the great courtesans of the period generally displayed in their clothing a simplicity and discretion of taste which gave them, in spite of their love of costly accessories and materials, an extremely distinguished appearance and a bearing which might lead even the most knowing observer to mistake their social status. Their carriages in particular were marvellous, wonderfully kept, and so correct and *chic* that in the Bois de Boulogne they had no need to fear the rivalry of the carriages of the duchesses and wives of ambassadors. Most of the *demi-mondaines* had *coupés* with rubber tyres or carriages with two footmen on the box, in the fashion of the period. They would on no account have appeared in the Bois in a simple victoria. The large, open, dark blue, red-wheeled carriage of the *cocotte* Barucci, the yellow equipage, with its two faultless half-breeds, of Caroline Hasse, the somewhat darker but no less beautiful *calèche* of Adèle Courtois, the carriages of Constanze, Lucile Mangin, Esther Duparc, Anna Delion, Cora Pearl, were extraordinarily elegant and up-to-date. The fashionable loungers in the Bois and the Avenue des Champs-Élysées knew them all by sight, and recognized them from afar.

Even in their lives the *cocottes* of the Second Empire observed a certain *convenance*. They never had more than one patron at a time, one who could keep them in great style, and was rich

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enough to give his mistress security. Zed declares that the syndicates of lovers known to some other epochs were considered vulgar during this period. Once they had found a 'steady friend'—and the supply was ample—these girls fulfilled their duties proudly and without more ado, and apart from that thought of nothing but enjoyment. Such included, no doubt, the distribution of favours among the young and elegant men of the world, who were always available, but who were not rich enough or stupid enough to keep a mistress of their own. With these young men the *cocotte* was free to amuse herself, both in public and in the house of her keeper. Her companionship cost them on an average about two hundred francs a month, whereas the friend and patron had to pay ten times as much. It would seem to be the dandies who got most out of this arrangement—pleasure and the charm of elegant feminine society with tender looks and prattling *badinage*. There was great competition for these intimate friends, and they were treated as good comrades, from whom one had no secrets, and in whose society one felt no constraint. Sometimes these girls were madly in love with their young friends, gave them all their favours, and went about with them on all occasions, and they nearly always preferred them to the protector who paid them the bulk of their incomes. He, poor man, was usually anonymous, and remained completely unknown in fashionable circles. He had his set hours with his beautiful lady, his rights, which, however, never stretched beyond the door of the bedroom, and he was neither elegant nor clever enough to parade his conquest. He was treated with discretion and his rights respected, and he usually had the secret satisfaction of thinking that he had as his friend the mistress of this or that great nobleman—whereas it was really the nobleman who was cheating him of his fair lady. This relative faithfulness consisted in the fact that the girls did not betray him with a rival from his own class, yet did not give him their love in exchange for his money. The *betara* of



THE COCKTAIL BAR
Water-colour by G. Léonée
About 1920

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the Second Empire is the prostitute *par excellence*. Moreck says :

She remains so even in the purifying fire of a true love, of an unassumed, unselfish passion, such as is described by Alexandre Dumas in *La Dame aux camélias*, that ideal of morbid beauty . . . who on one occasion in her bed submits to the caresses of her paying lover and, a few hours later, to the kisses of the true love.

The mode of life of the famous *cocottes* of the Second Empire gave them a certain freedom and independence to which they attached immense importance. They would on no account permit anyone to behave improperly in their presence. With the gesture of a duchess they would dismiss any man who dared to become too familiar. Nor did they take the first rich man who crossed their paths, but chose him very carefully from among those who had enough wealth to be able to ruin themselves in their service. From their fashionable acquaintances they accepted suppers, theatre tickets, and perfumes, but never took from them presents of money—they could not have given them enough. Besides, it would not have occurred to them to consider a man to be *chic* and distinguished merely on account of his wealth and because he spent a lot of money. In order to aspire to the position of a ‘friend’ a man had to possess style, the manners of a real gentleman, and to be an authentic member of high society.

If, on the other hand, they found a distinguished gentleman who interested himself in them and made their future secure, “then they would accept him for one reason only, never for love or for the sake of sensual passion,” writes Uzanne in his *Parisiennes*.

The Society men who have an open and permanent relationship with a courtesan subscribe, as it were, to a contract without passion, by which they take a lover whose luxury will do them credit, who runs a well-kept, elegant house for them, to which they can invite their friends and fellow-clubmen with their mistresses, and where they play baccarat, indulge in eccentricities.

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and where, in their small circle, they can be as coarse as they like, be convivial to the point of intoxication and independent to the point of rudeness.

A man of fashion required from the woman he kept (as he kept a yacht, a racing stable, or a hunting box) everything which would contribute to his reputation for wealth and *chic*, for in the Society of the Second Empire men were valued according to their ostentation. Therefore they attached more importance to the *toilettes* of their lady friends than to their beauty or youth. It was more important to have a good seat on a horse than the wit of a Sophie Arnould. They liked them more for their very extravagance, and their whims, their superficiality, were more valued than their intelligence, their affection, or their pleasant company. They required from them neither love nor lust, but merely to seal their reputation as men of the world. It was part of the *rôle* of these elegant Phrynes, therefore, that they should spend money; indeed, the squandering of fortunes on jewels, clothes, and furniture was their chief task. The more men they ruined, the more dangerous and insatiable they were considered, the more they were in demand, for their fame was proportioned to the number of bankruptcies they caused in high society.

The day of the pampered *cocottes* of this kind began very late, for the world of fashion turned day into night and night into day. They seldom returned home before four or five o'clock in the morning, and slept until well on into the afternoon. Then, from about two o'clock, there began for them an existence of restlessness, variety, and every imaginable distraction. The short hours until the evening hardly sufficed to don with the utmost care their elegant evening *toilettes*, before driving in some gay company or with their lovers *en titre* to a *cabaret*, to supper, or to some dancing establishment. And they were usually an hour late in arriving at their rendezvous.

The early hours of the afternoon were devoted to the care of

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their bodies. The elegant *demi-mondaine* received, just as the lady of the great world, her *coiffeur* or *coiffeuse*, her manicure, her seamstress, dressmaker, and milliner, ordered from one some delightful underwear, from another a new dress, a hat, or a shawl, or consulted her jeweller about some article of jewellery which a generous lover wanted or would pay for. All this took up a great deal of time, and the elegant *demi-mondaine* was not ready before four o'clock, when, marvellously dressed and made up with exquisite art, she stepped into her carriage to drive, according to the season of the year, either in the Bois or in the *grands boulevards* of the town. On reaching the Boulevard des Italiens a halt was sometimes made at the Librairie Nouvelle in order to talk over the latest novels with well-known writers, for these "incomparable daughters of Eve," as Zed calls them, did not, in their leisure hours, scorn either literature or *littérateurs*. But their innumerable gallantries did not leave them much time for such minor interests as art and literature, and it was probably more for the sake of the *littérateurs* themselves that they went to the bookshops.

The evening was no less full than the afternoon. It began as a rule in some boulevard theatre and ended in a *chambre séparée* in the famous Café Anglais. Many of the elegant *demi-mondaines* owned a box at the Théâtre Français or at the Opéra. Here they appeared always in full evening dress and with wonderful jewellery, usually accompanied by a lady friend. But, unlike the courtesans of the eighteenth century, they behaved extremely discreetly at the opera, and did not strive to draw attention to themselves. Their outward appearance was that of real Society ladies. With the calm dignity of the latter they received their friends and admirers in their boxes, gave their hands to be kissed as though they were duchesses or marquises, and conversed with their cavaliers as though they were accustomed to nothing but the conversation of a distinguished *salon*. Loose behaviour of any kind was left at home.

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In the big theatres they were women of the world, and men behaved toward them as though they really were so.

But it was a different matter when they made up gay parties to visit the small boulevard theatres. Full dress and etiquette were out of place there. They sat in groups with their young friends in the proscenium boxes, and gave themselves up entirely to enjoyment and entertainment. Frequently it was very lively and noisy in these boxes, and the behaviour of the occupants would be very free and indecorous without the public taking exception. On the contrary, people were so accustomed to the high spirits of certain well-known and notorious men-about-town that they enjoyed this wild behaviour, and even, to a certain extent, joined in it and applauded many of their wanton excesses.

After the theatre and the opera fashionable idlers usually went to the Café Anglais, the most distinguished Parisian restaurant of the period, which the future King of England and many other royal princes honoured with their presence. There a large private room was at their disposal, known as the "Grand Seize." Here many a wealthy aristocrat, many a distinguished member of the Jockey Club, supped in company with these charming *cocottes*, who knew how to season an evening's entertainment with grace, elegance, and wit. Here the members of the *jeunesse dorée* appeared one after another, either in company or alone, according as they had been favoured by Venus on the streets or by luck in baccarat at the gaming tables. Here they were quite private, and ran no risk of being intruded upon or of encountering tiresome strangers. The merriment continued until early in the morning, and the *bourgeois* who happened to be on the boulevard at that late hour threw curious and longing glances at the brightly lighted windows of the "Grand Seize" in the Café Anglais. Not until the last three years of the Second Empire did the "Grand Seize" lose something of its reputation as a centre of gaiety.

The greatest attraction for the *demi-mondaine*, as it has been



BEFORE THE MIRROR
Water-colour by Ludwig Kainer. 1925

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everywhere and at all times, was the public dance-halls, of which there were a number in Paris at that period. "Mabille" and the "Château des Fleurs," in the Champs-Élysées, were the best-known and most elegant among them. There lovely *demi-mondaines* could be seen promenading in the most miraculous and extravagant *toilettes* on the arms of their admirers. Few of them danced, but those who did danced with all the art of professionals. They danced the classical *cancan*, intricate and lascivious, but not yet *canaille*, like the *cancan* at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, in the days of La Goulue and La Grille d'Égout. Rigolboche was the most famous *cancan* dancer of the Second Empire. She lived in high style, possessed innumerable diamonds, and chose her lovers from the most fashionable circles.

Besides these public balls, the great *cocottes* had private balls in their own houses, marked by a luxury which was equal to that of the richest families and an even greater predominance of grace and beauty. Some of them were conducted with at least a show of propriety, the ladies in evening frocks and the men in tail-coats. Others gave parties which rapidly developed into orgies, where any kind of clothes could be worn or even no clothes at all. Cora Pearl was famous for the magnificence of her flowers and fruit, and on one occasion gave a party at which, for dessert, nectarines were served on dishes covered with Parma violets which had had to be brought from Nice at a cost of 2000 francs. She never travelled to one of the fashionable spas without her own *chef* and a regiment of servants. Her favourite resorts were Vichy and Baden-Baden, but she sometimes came to England, and on such occasions was usually accompanied by one of her lovers. This did not prevent her, however, from making new acquaintances wherever she went. Vichy witnessed many an example of her extravagances. Although she had dukes and princes as her friends, and one of them alone allowed her an income of 25,000 francs a month, she never had enough, and was often

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without a *sou*, for she squandered immense sums on entertaining. Money ran through her fingers like water. A visit to Baden-Baden never cost her less than 200,000 francs, for she always appeared covered with diamonds and with the most splendid thoroughbred horses and beautiful carriages. It is true that most of her possessions were gifts. The Duc de Morny saw her skating one winter's day in Paris when she was still somewhat of a beginner, both on the ice and in the sphere of gallantry. But her slim, blonde, English beauty—she was English by birth—and her impudent provocativeness pleased him. Soon after his first visit to her he presented her with a white Arab thoroughbred, and later furnished for her one of the most beautiful houses in the vicinity of the Champs-Élysées, which he had bought from an impoverished aristocrat for 450,000 francs.

Cora Pearl had the worst reputation of all the Parisian courtesans of her period, for she was unashamedly promiscuous. No man, however rich and generous he might be, ever succeeded in making her his slave. She was faithful to no one and loved no one. Yet men with famous names competed for her favours. At Baden on one occasion the authorities refused to let her into the casino until no less a person than the Duc de Morny came forward to give her his public protection. Cora herself has left an amusing and light-hearted account of the adventure.

I arrived at—well, the name of the place I forget, but it is somewhere where one goes to show oneself¹ and whence one often returns the poorer. I had a tremendous train; a baggage wagon, six horses, many servants. At first I was taken for the Princess Gargamelle [a fictitious name]. I was by no means flattered thereby.

I presented myself with a view to enter the rooms. A com-

¹ The authoress of the present work suggests that this incident took place "at a fashionable English seaside resort," which is plainly impossible. The chapter headings in both English and French editions of Cora Pearl's memoirs give Baden.—TRANSLATOR.

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missaire [*sic*] forbade me to enter. It appeared that I was the object of an exceptional measure. I asked for what motive this extraordinary step was taken; why was I not permitted to go and lose my money like, for instance, a simple marchioness?

They replied, "It is by order of the Queen."

In that country people are very severe on the subject of good morals. All the men are sober, all the women, even the plainest, chaste. Young girls are permitted to read no French fiction but *The Adventures of Télémaque*. . . .

To console myself I went to the races. I met Dufour and Tangis [fictitious names for well-known dandies of the period], and told them of my misadventures.

They could hardly believe me.

"Come with me," I said, "so that you may see me insulted again and have a good laugh."

Whilst we were talking a servant brought a card.

Make haste, finish your dinner; I offer you my arm, upon which you can enter the *salon*.

MORAY

[a fictitious name for Morny].

"See!" said I to my two friends.

"Truly," they replied, "it is a pleasant revenge and worthy of the courtesy of a *grand seigneur*."

"Yes," I answered, proud and happy as I was; "a true Frenchman!"

As usual when she was at a fashionable resort, she had about fifteen friends or so to dinner that evening. They did not take long over the meal, and then Cora repaired to the casino on the arm of the Duc. The fashionable visitors of the resort, many of whom belonged to the French, English, and Russian nobility, could not get over their astonishment. Morny, one of the most distinguished figures of the Second Empire, treated the *demi-mondaine* as though she were a duchess of the noblest blood. He had been himself to the Queen, and had begged permission for Cora to be allowed to enter the casino.

When this extravagant *cocotte* wrote her memoirs in the days of her poverty she looked back over her life, and ended her book with the following words:

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It is finished—my memoirs have come to an end : many others are at the beginning or in the middle of theirs. There will always be attractive graces, just as there will always be princes and diplomats, idlers and capitalists, gentlemen and swindlers. Were I to begin my life over again, I should be less a madcap perhaps, and also more respected ; not because I should be more worthy of esteem, but because I should be more careful. Am I to regret my present position ? Yes, if I consider how poor I am. No, if I take into account what a quiet life would have cost me. If *louis* are made to roll and diamonds to glitter, I cannot be reproached with having perverted from their normal uses these noble things. With the latter I glittered, the former I set rolling. It was according to the rule, and all my sin has been a too great respect for the rule, rendering to the currency what belonged to Cæsar and to my creditors that which had ceased to belong to me. Honour and justice are satisfied. I have never deceived anybody because I have never belonged to anybody. My independence was all my fortune, and I have known no other happiness ; and it is still what attaches me to life : I prefer it to the richest necklaces, I mean necklaces which you cannot sell because they do not belong to you.¹

Few *demi-mondaines* were as frank as Cora Pearl.

The winter season of the great Parisian *demi-monde* usually ended with a brilliant masked ball held at the “Frères Provençaux,” a noted establishment for the entertainments of high society. The *demi-monde* was entirely excluded, with the exception of the most famous and fashionable of the *grandes cocottes*. All wore masks—those of the women small and provocative, those of the men monstrous and comical. The social *milieu* was preserved, the individual identity was lost—an ideal situation for the throwing down of the barriers of prudery. All restraint was abandoned, and the guests danced a wild, unrestrained *cancan*. Many a young dandy who was the soul of correctness in the streets or in the *salons* of his acquaintance

¹ Cora Pearl wrote her memoirs in French, and they were published in Paris in 1886. The above quotation (halting as it is) is taken from the “authentic and authorised translation” published in London by Messrs George Vickers in the same year. The description of her triumph at the casino is derived from the same source.—TRANSLATOR.



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proved himself able to execute the movements of this provocative dance with an abandon and dexterity which professionals might have envied.

There were, however, dances of the *demi-monde* where everything was as respectable and *comme il faut* as a dancing lesson. Once or twice a week the ladies, if they were not otherwise engaged, went to one of the two dancing masters famous at that time, Cellarius and Laborde. The one had his dancing school in the Passage d'Opéra, the other in the vicinity of the boulevards. During the day they taught virtuous young girls, Society women, and respectable *bourgeoises* how to dance, but on certain evenings the elegant *demi-monde* met at their schools to learn the newest steps of the *cancan*. These dancing lessons took place with great propriety in a low *salon* which could hold no more than twenty people, and which was furnished with a few mirrors and divans around the walls. Dancing went on for about two hours, the ladies dressed in street clothes of studied simplicity. They danced very decently, very correctly, and without calling attention to themselves, but this did not prevent them from flirting with the young officers who were present in mufti. Many a *débutante* ventured here her first step into the *demi-monde*, as, for example, the lovely Caroline Hassé. She used to go to Laborde in very modest clothing, almost shabby. Her wonderful beauty and her charm attracted attention, and it was not long before she was seen in the Bois in a marvellous yellow carriage, with two liveried servants on the box. Caroline's elegant appearance could lead to only one conclusion: that she had found a very rich patron who showered diamonds and bank-notes upon her, and had set her up on a very lavish scale. Wherever she appeared she attracted all eyes to her, as much by her elegance and taste in dress as by her beauty. Her success, too, was no ephemeral matter, as in the case of so many of her colleagues. She rose—or fell—step by step until she was one of the most notorious women in Paris. Her *appartement* in the Rue Ponthieu, where she lived in

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the same house as Cora Pearl, was a veritable temple of Venus. Entertainments and orgies were held there garnished with every luxury which extravagance could suggest. Her bedroom was furnished in a style since vulgarized by less fashionable harlots. In order to make the whiteness of her skin and her limbs, of which she was justifiably proud, appear even more dazzling, the pillows and covers of the bed were made of black silk. All the furniture of her boudoir too was upholstered in black. It was the home of a real courtesan. The atmosphere of boundless sensuality and inordinate luxury was maintained throughout.

Many of these *cocottes* possessed, in addition to their beautiful houses, an obscure *pied-à-terre* in some unfashionable part of Paris. In the great mansions they received only the patron who paid for all their grandeur; in the small *pied-à-terre* they met the innumerable other men whom fate brought their way. The Baronne d'Ange—a pseudonym, of course—had a luxurious house near the Bois de Boulogne, where, from seven every evening to noon of the following day, she lived an almost matrimonial life with her protector, who was firmly convinced that she was absolutely faithful to him. But as soon as he had left the house she stepped into her carriage, and drove to a little house which she had rented in one of the poorer quarters near the centre of the town. There, like a doctor or a lawyer, she received her clients, among them poor artists, students, or officers, who paid for her favour with a *louis*, a picture, or a poem.

With the fall of the Second Empire these last great *cocottes*, who had the appearance of princesses, disappeared from public life. The *demi-monde* was not entirely destroyed, for it will always exist, but a new era diverted it into other paths. The great world no longer interested itself so intensely in the details of the life of a merely spendthrift courtesan. Such women had to throw something else into the scale besides their beauty, extravagance, and love of adventure, and at the

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end of the nineteenth century the variety stage, the *cabaret*, and the *café chantant* became the accepted bridge to a life of galantry. The women for whom men ruined themselves, just as successfully as they had ruined themselves for the *grandes cocottes*, now appeared nightly on the stage of a music-hall, and wished to be known as actresses.

Nevertheless, says Dühren, there was no lack, even in high society at the end of the nineteenth century, of those mysterious creatures from that other world which we call the *demi-monde*. There were certain elegant ladies who had grand houses and lived on their incomes, and yet were neither respectable women nor actual *cocottes*.

They are women who preserve their independence and their dignity. It is not easy to approach them. They choose their lover, not for the livery of his servants, but to suit their own taste. But these women preserve their freedom. They do not, it is true, despise either gifts or money, but they never bind themselves to any man. Often they give love in exchange for love, or, at least, passion for passion. They like the pleasant life of a spoiled woman of Society, and they would soon dismiss anyone who attempted any ribaldry in their presence.

In these *demi-mondaines* of a new type can be seen already the features of our modern Phrynes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LADY OF THE FIN DE SIÈCLE

IN the last twenty years of the nineteenth century women sought to exploit their charms not by exposing them to the public view, but by carefully concealing them beneath a cloud of frills and flounces. The masculine half of humanity was supposed only to guess at what was hidden under the bell-skirt or the close-fitting princess dress. The exhibitionism of the Directory and the coquetry of the Second Empire had given place to a positive fetishism of clothes and underwear. The period of luxurious underwear begins. This, however, was mainly in France and America, for in Germany, England, and other Germanic countries luxurious *lingerie* was at first a privilege only of actresses and ladies of the *demi-monde*. *Frou-frou* begins to play its seductive part first of all on the stage, in the *cancan*, and then in the public ballroom. Later it spreads to the most elegant strata of society. The actress has become the acknowledged leader of fashion, and has won for herself a recognized position in society. The leading actresses are no longer treated as mere entertainers and expected to feed with the servants; they are invited to the great houses as guests. Hostesses are delighted to be able to 'show' them to their friends and to bask in their reflected glory. The clothes of actresses are imitated, and a standard of luxury set up far in excess of that which would have arisen among the aristocracy itself.

In Vienna Hélène Odilon was the ideal pattern of an elegant and extravagant woman, because of her wonderful clothes and hats as well as on account of her great success as a stage beauty.



Mlle EDMONDE GUY

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In Berlin Rita Leon, Jenny Gross, and Marie Reisenhofer set the fashion in dress. In Paris among the queens of elegance were the actresses Réjane, Marthe Régnier, the dancer Cléo de Mérode, the beautiful Spaniard Otero, and the young Mistinguette of the Moulin Rouge. The most famous beauty at the turn of the century was probably Cléo de Mérode, "*la belle des reines, la reine des belles*, the favourite of sculptors, gods, and kings." She was the perfect type of the woman of the *fin de siècle*, when slimness was beginning to be fashionable, although it was still a slimness terribly distorted by the use of that instrument of torture, the corset.

None the less, slimness became the rage. Extravagant women such as Princess Chimay, who ran away with a gipsy fiddler, and then, clothed only in fleshings, displayed the corseted lines of her figure on the stage, or the beautiful and elegant Crown Princess Louise of Saxony, who could no longer endure the ceremonious and artificial Court life, and fled from it recklessly with the tutor of her five children, although they aroused a storm of indignation, were none the less admired for their daring. Their beauty and elegance, in the eyes of a portion of the public at least, outweighed the scandals they occasioned. They represented the ideal of beauty of the woman of that period, and the worldly women of the aristocracy and of the upper *bourgeoisie* attempted to be as elegant, if not as dashing, as these stage stars and eccentric royal ladies. Naturally the bounds of decency had to be rather more strictly observed than was necessary for women on the stage, but still the stimulus came from the footlights.

The elegant woman of the turn of the century never walks in the street in the day-time *décolleté*. Only in the evening, for a ball or a dinner or for the opera, is a comparatively modest *décolletage* allowed—except in Court circles, where it is *de rigueur* to have bare arms and shoulders, but even here the arms are covered with long *suède* or silk gloves. The skirt reaches to the feet, and has a train, even for street wear.

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This long-trained skirt is worn, in the first place, to make the figure appear slenderer, and secondly in order to be lifted so that the dainty underskirt of muslin and Valenciennes lace or of shimmering silk can be displayed.

The silk petticoat was a most important part of the *toilette* of an elegant woman, and was fashioned so that she might make a constant parade of it. Whether it was raining or not, her skirts were meant to be lifted, and the mere manner of lifting them became subject to the fluctuation of fashion. Every season introduced a new manner in which the elegant lady might make this graceful movement, and the Parisienne carried it out with particular activity. She lifted her dress very high, so high that she could carry it comfortably; and then she shook herself a little, so as to be sure that her lace-trimmed petticoat was hanging evenly round her ankles. However, if possible, she avoided looking down to see if everything was in order, because that would be considered a sign of ignorance in these grave matters of the *toilette*. She always seemed to cross the street on tiptoe, and walked so quickly, and lifted her heels so high, that even the tips of her toes hardly touched the dirt. She did not need any patent dress-lifter—like so many women in England and Germany. A tilt of the hip and two fingers were enough for her. Let us watch her as she tackles the problem. She stands still for a moment; then the folds of her dress are gathered together with a swift movement, and lifted high enough on one side for her hand to rest comfortably on her hip. But she is always concerned to see that the ripple of white Valenciennes lace on her underclothing is visible. While the elegance and *chic* of the street dress, made of dark, soft materials, lies in the inimitably faultless cut of a good tailor, the greatest luxury and the richest fantasy are expended upon underwear. Uzanne says:

The *lingerie* shops have grasped in a wonderful way that it is impossible to devise trimmings sufficiently fantastic or silks sufficiently transparent, to invent enough filmy, flimsy materials

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in delicate, dainty colours. Lace from Valenciennes, *guipures* from Ireland, enchanting laces from Mechlin, Chantilly, and Alençon, and *point de Venise* are used to deck the fashionable beauty. The luxury of her intimate garments has become so complicated, so great and artistic, that volumes of description could be written without exhausting the subject. Women appear before us to a certain extent like books plainly bound, in a simple binding, without unnecessary decoration, but inside the covers, on the preliminary pages, they show the taste of the amateur . . . or, better still, an attractive modern woman of the *fin de siècle* resembles a tilted flower, whose innumerable petals become more and more beautiful and delicate as you reach the sweet depths of the innermost petals. She is like a rare orchid, who surrenders the fragrance of her mysteries only in the intimacy of love.

In the eyes of a loving husband or a passionate lover, with a sense of feminine clothing, nothing can equal the sight of his beloved undressing. The mysteries of antique statuary certainly possessed none of the intoxicating poetry of the rites which belong to the disrobing of our elegant goddesses when the hour of the apotheosis of their desires strikes, "when the coverings which billow round them fall one by one like light foam." Balzac, in his day, recognized in the manner in which a woman lifted her train or her skirt an art worthy of a prize. The grace of this movement is everything. The slender leg, in its black open-work gauze stocking set in a dainty buttoned boot reaching to the beginning of the calf—open shoes, pumps, and buckled shoes were a later invention in a woman's walking costume—appears all the more piquant in the white framework of petticoats the less its curves are exposed. The most complete connoisseur of feminine beauty can only deduce from the wonder that is shown the marvel that is hidden. The woman of the *fin de siècle* and of the beginning of the twentieth century, as Moreck says in his *Das weibliche Schönheitsideal*, preserved her body from the fate of becoming tedious to us by a subtle variety of skilfully chosen coverings. Unfortunately, the ideals of this period decreed that the most

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potent weapon of a woman's seduction should be the one most deleterious to her beauty—the corset. Far into the twentieth century this strange instrument enjoyed an erotic significance difficult for us now to imagine. Artists such as Reznicek, Guillaume, Heilemann, took the half-naked woman in her corset, lace-trimmed chemise, and petticoat as a favourite subject for their aphrodisiac drawings.

The aim of outer clothing is fascination in general, while underwear is always intended for the seduction of the individual, for the stimulation of husband or lover. The lace, the ribbons, the delicate muslins, the soft, clinging silks of an elegant woman's underclothing have an undoubted effect on a man's senses, and the woman of the end of the nineteenth century was the first to recognize this completely and frankly. The *lingerie* cupboards of the woman of fashion became armouries, the weapons in which were intended for offence rather than defence. Chemises, petticoats, *négligés*, night-dresses, dressing-jackets, nightcaps, corsets, stockings, became works of art, objects playing a definite æsthetic part in the life of pleasure. The man of the *fin de siècle* demanded of a woman that she should be "from the ankles upward, and from the neck downward, a single *via triumphalis*" for his desire, and women were quite ready to fulfil his wishes, for they took an intense pleasure themselves in their frills and flounces. The white cambric petticoat with its lace and frills was an undergarment with which woman could coquet quite openly, for her long skirt obliged her to lift it on every occasion. By the skilled lifting of her skirt the elegant woman shows her knowledge of the art of seduction, for she is well aware what power is possessed by a petticoat. So much is shown by the costly care lavished upon petticoats for about twenty years. Underneath the petticoat drawers grew shorter and shorter, while the chemise became ever finer and more delicately worked. These last, of course, were displayed only in the most intimate hours of dressing or undressing. Dainty objects of lace and



THE BATHER
Oil-painting by K. van Dongen

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diaphanous muslin clothed the lady of the century from shoulder to knee. Delicately coloured silk ribbons and bows were fixed on the shoulders of chemises and on the sides of the wide-divided skirts, or *directoire* knickers, but the latter, on an elegant lady of the *fin de siècle*, never reached beyond the knee. It is true that these undergarments of a fashionable woman afford an amusing comparison with those worn to-day—the knickers in particular seem to us so long and so ridiculously wide that at least three pairs of our modern combinations could be made out of them. But every fashion has its day and is beautiful while it lasts. Certainly the underwear of the women of the late nineties affected the senses as it has never done at any other period. It became woman's greatest weapon in the seduction of man, and it carried its victories from Paris to every other capital. According to Paul Leppin it became a positive fetish for many men.

When we see how a woman manoeuvres with a hundred little details of clothing, how she has taken into her calculations the weaknesses and passions of man to the very last detail, then we must stand before her toilet-table as we stand before a work of art, whose mechanism we can reckon among the most complicated results of physical and biological evolution.

The clever and experienced woman understands instinctively the effect of the fashion of her period and adapts herself to it.

The reign of the petticoat, however, was soon over. Already in 1906 a writer in a Paris fashion paper declared that the days of *frou-frou* were numbered :

Elegant ladies are resolutely thrusting on one side the petticoat, and are having recourse to coquettishly trimmed short knickers, which follow the lines of the body and perfect the charm of the close-fitting dress. In the Parisian *lingerie* workrooms inventive spirits and a thousand skilled hands are at work combining with the short knickers all the decorative delicacy which gave the petticoat its intimate triumphs. The costly lace has been transferred to these knickers, and immense sums are already being spent on the new underwear.

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The fashion of the *fin de siècle* provided women with ample means for skilfully hiding physical failings. The close-fitting tailored dress demanded a figure which not every woman possessed, but the tightly laced corset provided the ample hips and the full bust which fashion demanded. Either it kept within bounds the superabundance of flesh, or it made up what was lacking with padding. Many a man who thought that he had found an Aphrodite in the street or in the ballroom would later be disillusioned in an hour of intimacy—not infrequently on his wedding night—when his bride or his mistress laid aside in her dressing-room the separate items of her ‘perfect figure’: the thick pads of wide puffed hair, the false plaits and chignons, the artificial hips and bust-pads. Many another, however, experienced more pleasant surprises, for, under the jealous draperies of her clothing, the eye of the artist, the husband or lover thirsting for beauty, would discover the divine form of a Venus; his happiness was the more complete because he knew that this beauty was visible to him alone, belonged to him only, and was not displayed to the gaze of every man in the street or exposed to curious eyes at balls or bathing places, for evening dresses were still ample and bathing suits grotesque perhaps, but not immodest. This *bourgeois* tendency of sensuality to find its greatest pleasure in beauty draped, suggested rather than revealed, made every article of woman’s clothing into a fetish of the voluptuary.

Another tendency, however, was beginning to be manifest in the clothes designed for cyclists, for skaters, and above all for horsewomen. It is true that the sports-woman of to-day cannot refrain from smiling when she looks at the unpractical garments to which the women of that generation gave the name of ‘sports costume.’ The dress was still more important than the sport, and as in the ballroom and in the street clothes had stimulated masculine fantasy by the soft rustling of the silk petticoat, “the intoxicating music of the *frou-frou*,” so even on the ice rink, in the hunting field, at Tattersall’s, and

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on the famous riding tracks to be found in every capital, their purpose was to draw attention to the wearer. The vanity of the fashionable sporting woman of that time, and even ten years later, was on the whole greater than her sporting ambitions, and she attached more importance to the effect of her appearance and to the flirtation which she hoped would be inspired by it than to winning the game. Her greatest pleasure was to go to the ice rink in an attractive fur-trimmed, close-fitting skating costume, a small fur cap poised saucily a little on one side of her head, her slender hands in leather gloves tucked into a dainty muff, her skates on her arm. The cold winter air sent the blood to her face, swathed in a veil to add an interesting mystery to her appearance. She looked fresh and blooming, and on the way to the ice rink all the men's eyes were on her. She knew this, and rejoiced in the anticipation of the successes she was to have on the ice, and of the flutter to be caused in masculine bosoms by the sight of her lithe figure circling gracefully over the frozen surface of the rink. Sometimes this is a lake, sometimes a flooded field, or sometimes an 'ice palace' with water artificially frozen. There she skates, with laughing eyes, her muff pressed against her face, at the side of a boy or a girl friend, and is delighted if the glances of the men skaters follow her. She avoids appearing ungraceful, even if she should have a fall. And here again her underwear plays its part, for the fair skater of that period wore, even on the ice, underlinen and lace petticoats. Only the cyclist wore a divided skirt and sports knickers, or the very ungraceful but practical baggy breeches.

The horsewoman of the period was dressed more practically, but, even with her, social vanity and the desire to attract played a very important part. A beautiful horse with a slender, aristocratic rider in the saddle has always been one of the loveliest sights of sport, and the woman of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth knew this better than anyone, and made use of this beauty to her own

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advantage. Many of the elegant Amazons indulged in the sport of riding as a means to an end: in order to be seen and to attract attention! And if their seat were good and their clothes faultless they were happy. Their riding habits were made by the best tailors, their saddles and harness came from England. The horsewoman of 1900 wore her hair either in a tight bun or in a so-called Mozart plait—with a broad bow in the nape of the neck, which was particularly becoming to the 'flapper' in her wide-brimmed riding hat of straw or felt. In summer a white blouse with a three-inch stiff collar and a man's tie replaced the Amazon's close-fitting bodice. Equipped in this way, she could begin a flirtation on horseback almost in the middle of a gallop.

As soon as a lady has learned to keep her balance and can sit firmly in her saddle, her horse becomes a part of herself, and she can almost unconsciously guide its movements. Then she jogs along, making eyes and flirting with the friends who are with her, trots, canters, ambles, or gallops, is complete mistress of her mount, and directs it with a technical skill which makes the greatest impression on her admirers.

In the ballroom the elegant woman was supreme, but here too the dancing was but a means to an end. As well as the waltz, the Rhinelander, the polka, the mazurka, quadrilles and square dances were freely danced, but there was no necessity to pay much attention to the steps. Dancing was not a question of technique as it is to-day, but merely a matter of emotion and surrender. There was no critical public sitting round to find fault with the dancing itself; at the most they might censure too open a display of flirting between the dancing couples, for flirting was the most popular pastime of women and girls at the turn of the century, especially at dances. The Viennese waltz melodies of Johann and Joseph Strauss were a direct provocation to love-making, and they immediately took the whole world by storm. Flirting was carried on as enthusiastically in America as in Europe, and by lively women of ripe



EVENING DRESS

*Pen and wash drawing by Annie Ganz-Offterdinger
1928*

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years as well as by quite young girls. The young lady of good family regarded it as her right, a necessary substitute for the hours of real love which she might not experience until she was married. But however far she might go in a flirtation, she never went the whole way. The type has been classified by French novelists and labelled, aptly enough, the *demi-vierge*, has been described by Marcel Prévost in his novel *Les Demi-vierges*, and by Hans von Kahlenberg in his *Nixchen*. Flirting became the accepted safety-valve of passion in polite society, and the new enthusiasm for dancing and sport gave it splendid opportunities. Fuchs goes even further, and, writing in 1905, declares that the propertied classes made sport into a complete engine of flirtation.

All kinds of sport have increased to an enormous degree in the last decades, not so much because their importance for health has been recognized as because it has been found that nothing else provides such admirable opportunities for undisturbed flirting. Only *naïveté* can doubt this association. Sport is the modern solution of the need for some kind of sexual intercourse felt by girls and women of the leisured classes.

The same applies to the private dance, which was often the only opportunity for a young lady of good social standing to find a man. How many marriages were arranged after a single meeting in the ballroom! At the beginning of this century a young lady of position was not allowed to dance the whole evening with a gentleman who was not her *fiancé*. In very strict circles she could not even let him have several dances in succession, unless the young man approached her parents on the following day to ask for her hand; otherwise she was compromised. But secretly she could carry on the wildest flirtation with him, which might take her as far as a secluded lodging house, a bachelor's quarters, or a student's room. The moral hypocrisy of the *bourgeois* period did not permit any woman to have an official lover like those of earlier epochs. If she had a lover or led a life of gallantry she had to do so with

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the utmost discretion. She sends the servant out of the house when her friend is expected. His carriage must on no account stand in front of her house. If she visits her lover at his house or goes with him to the *chambres séparées*, which were very numerous and popular in big towns, then this must be done with every precaution and as unostentatiously as possible. A veil makes her face almost unrecognizable on these journeys to her rendezvous, and a simple street dress raises her above all suspicion. And yet unfaithfulness, secret love affairs, concubinage (which in Germany was forbidden by law), adultery, and marital scandals were never more widespread than at that period. The old proverb that forbidden fruit is sweetest was particularly applicable in the last years of the nineteenth century, when the *bourgeoisie* was at the height of its power, and it was the elegant married woman who was the most in demand. Even if she were only moderately pretty she encountered temptation on every side: in trains, on trams, in the big hotels, in *cafés*, in shops, in museums, in the theatre, out walking, in the street, at the seaside, and in the country; and many of those most careful to display the greatest decency and decorum in public possessed certain features characteristic of the *demi-mondaine*. Under the mask of convention is hidden

the animal, the procreator in woman, the suppressed wildness of her instincts. . . . We see these women in the pictures of the fashion artists of the nineteenth century; they smile at us with superior irony out of their large, wide eyes, a little tired, a little resigned, a little worn out by the social duties of a lady, a little nervous from the restless social life and the fatiguing gaiety of their period. The main feature of their beauty is piquancy, the melody of their being is sensuality, their kingdom is the dainty boudoir. . . . Two dangers threaten their security: physically obesity, spiritually scandal. Both these precipices beset their path in the life which they live as mere creatures of luxury, without any social sense, in sweet idleness, reading novels . . . lying on a divan. For they realize life only as a background, as a setting

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for themselves, without possessing the positive standards of *joie de vivre*.¹

Once at least she hopes to experience some such adventure of love as she has just been reading about. The novel fans her smouldering passion into flame, and in Paris and other capitals the *maisons de rendez-vous* give her the opportunity she is looking for, even if she has no friends and admirers on whom she can rely. Sometimes a long journey promises adventure—the woman of 1900 was for ever taking long journeys. There is nothing indecorous in making an acquaintance on a train, and if anything comes out of it no one need ever know. In another town, in another country, she is completely unknown. In the large luxury hotels her distinguished appearance and her assured elegance are sufficient, and no one would believe that this charming woman, with her proud, almost prudish manner and her absolutely ladylike behaviour, only made the acquaintance of the 'husband' at her side yesterday, in a railway carriage. The handsome, distinguished couple soon leave, but if they could be followed it would soon be seen that very often their ways part at the station. She returns to Berlin to her husband and children, and he continues his journey to other parts, in the happy knowledge of having had an adventure with a respectable woman.

¹ *Sittengeschichte der neuesten Zeit*, by Curt Moreck (3 vols., Paul Aretz Verlag, Dresden).

CHAPTER XV

DEMI-MONDE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

LE MONDE at the turn of the century is emulated in artificiality by the *demi-monde*. The new kind of courtesan, the *cocotte*, is neither so young as the *grisette* at the beginning of the century nor so extravagant as the *demi-mondaine* of the Second Empire. The real *hetæra* of the aristocracy, with all the pretensions of her position, has disappeared. Vice itself has become *bourgeois*. It is true there are still elegant women whose names are on every tongue, whose *toilettes*, horses and carriages, jewels, and fine houses are talked about, but they have grown rarer. And these are mostly no longer young, but rich and affected, artificial, unreal, and extremely materialistic.

They possess wonderful *toilettes* and grand houses, not from any sense of beauty or artistic taste, but because it is required by their profession. These things are necessary, just as a dentist must have a properly furnished waiting-room. If an admirer in a courtly moment sends flowers to a *demi-mondaine* she will say he would have done better to give her the money.

To have any position in the gay world she must have some kind of special notoriety. She must be richly and elegantly dressed, possess valuable jewellery, must go to Nice in the winter, and risk huge sums at the tables at Monte Carlo. She will get everything back in the end through some generous patron whose acquaintance she has made there. She must, above all, be cosmopolitan, speak several languages, at least colloquially, must be good at all kinds of modern sport or, at any rate, show intelligence about them. She must be familiar

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with the names of all the nobility and of the great figures of the financial world, as well as with those of the best-known racing men. She must be able to number a baron or a count, if not a prince, among her lovers, and must cut some kind of public figure herself, preferably as a music-hall star or variety dancer on the stage, even if it be for only a short time, so that she can say she is an artist. All this takes time, money, and training, and by the time the aspirant has attained an assured position she is no longer young.

So persevering and veteran a lady could offer to her admirer very little in the physical sense. Often she was merely his friend, the test of his elegance. It was necessary to the reputation of a man of the world that he should keep a woman who had already been the mistress of several rich men and, if possible, ruined them. She might live with her admirer, but their relationship was official and symbolical rather than intimate. The woman knew what was expected of her, and did her best to meet her lover's requirements. So long as she never missed a race meeting, so long as her *toilette* was always striking and people talked about her, her friend required no more. He was content to be proud of her.

If, in addition, she shows taste at his receptions, if her character is proud and distinguished, if she can drive a dogcart skilfully, if she is active in the hunting field, and assumes a flattering stupidity in all questions of art or literature, then she is the perfect and ideal mistress for him, worthy of his money and his esteem.

These creatures of luxury, however, had their rivals. About 1900 the rise of the American bar and the night club to the level of social institutions brought with it an entirely new type of *demi-mondaine*. Elegant, cultured women began to be seen every evening at exclusive and luxurious night haunts run for the entertainment of rich men of Society. These modern *hetæra* tried to appear as much like ladies as possible, and were treated as such by the men. They made themselves out to be

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of good family—and frequently assumed a title. Their real names were never mentioned, and their profession not so much as hinted at. Their education, as a rule, was good. They professed a cosmopolitan culture, spoke several languages, or at least English and French, and had a superficial knowledge of literature and art. They had visited every fashionable pleasure resort in Europe, and were accomplished women of the world. At the supper table they handled their knives and forks as faultlessly as though they had been brought up in the best nurseries, and were never at a loss if they were called upon to eat some foreign delicacy or rare dish. They never committed a *faux pas*, and in their dress showed a perfect taste which was envied by real ladies. Their breeding was perfect, and no dubious remark ever fell from their lips. Their friends, who usually belonged to the best society, were noblemen, officers in mufti, big industrial magnates, rich idlers, who treated them with every respect, and there was nothing in the conduct of the gentlemen to indicate that they were associating with women who lived by love. And yet every one knew that Mrs So-and-so had a delightful house in the best part of the town, and was willing to receive there, unceremoniously, any rich man who cared to call.

Although the ladies of Society did not care to admit it, it was this new *demi-monde* which ruled and decided the fashion in matters of elegance. There was indeed nothing new in such a situation, for in matters of this kind the woman who lives by love has always been a pioneer. She is the first to venture on any new extravagance; others follow only when there is no longer any danger of being stared at. The large flower or feather trimmed hats of the beginning of the twentieth century were worn first and in their most eccentric form by the elegant *demi-monde* in the bars. In time these hats became cart-wheels. Valuable ostrich feathers (known as 'weepers'), graceful plumes, and hideous stuffed birds decorated these monstrosities of hats. Several hat-pins were necessary to hold



LIPSTICK

Water-colour by Steffie Nathan
1928

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them firm on the head and prevent them from being carried away by the wind; and there is no doubt that these large be-feathered and beflowered hats were very becoming, and added a rakish elegance to the fashionable bars or night clubs where the gay world of the *fin de siècle* and the first ten years of the twentieth century supped, danced, and amused itself. The dress and the hat still triumphed over the body; they, rather than the figure itself, were regarded as the principal engines of seduction. Even the deep *décolletage* often worn with these feathered hats did not, as in former periods, play the most important part. The slender 'weepers,' which fell on to the bare, white-powdered shoulders, attracted attention to the *décolletage*, and the *demi-mondaine* was particularly skilful in making use of this effect of contrast. She was more daring than the Society lady, who could adopt these fashions only in a modified form, for the *décolletage* of a lady had always to be a little higher, the 'weeper' a little smaller, the brim of the hat a little narrower than those of the *demi-mondaine*.

Another competitor for the attention of men at the turn of the century was the young mannequin of the elegant dress *salons* and the big shops. These mannequins mostly came from families in poor circumstances; they were often the children of seamstresses and labourers. The young girl or young woman of the educated classes who can to-day take up the profession of mannequin in a grand *salon* as readily as any other feminine profession would have been impossible at the beginning of the twentieth century. The mannequin still had a dubious reputation, not always, if often, deserved. But even these young mannequins were perfect ladies in appearance, and indeed their elegant, slender figures often made the fashionable patrons of their shops look dowdy and ill-bred. They too visited the grand bars to look for a rich friend or, at least, to make useful connexions. They wore, as a rule, very well-fitting, silk-lined, tailored costumes, and every step they took had a crisp rustle, the seductive music of their silk underwear.

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And in order to render the mysterious rustling made by the silk of the petticoat and the skirt rubbing against each other more effective, they held the long skirt, which fitted closely round their hips, even more closely to them as they lifted it. Thus they stepped along the streets, well bred and graceful, unspeakably proud and unapproachable. Gustav Hochstetter has given a delicious and telling description of this type of girl in his *Roland von Berlin*. He calls his heroine Dorchen, and if his Dorchen is not actually a mannequin at any rate she belongs to the same category and to the same period. Dorchen is

blonde—guaranteed genuine. Young—guaranteed eighteen. *Chic*—guaranteed Gerson. And terribly well bred. In carriage, gait, and speech. Never a dubious word. Quite the lady. Where does she get it? Heaven only knows! Three years ago she was still an apprentice in a small milliner's shop in the Friedrichstrasse. To-day she is more at home in Nice and Monte, Venice and St Moritz, than a fifty-five-year-old business magnate from the Tiergartenstrasse.

Her connexions extend to incredibly high circles. When the head waiter calls her to the telephone she asks in tones of the utmost nonchalance: "Who is there, Ober? His Highness or only the Count?"

Dorchen is beautiful—all connoisseurs are agreed about that. But her greatest charm lies in her dainty, fair little face, not in the voluptuous lines of her slender figure. Her greatest attraction is her charming conversation. You can talk to her about anything. But—a coarse word—and it is all up with Dorchen. But "if you treat Dorchen with delicacy," then to converse with her is a joy. And there are gentlemen of taste and good position who come to the bar to chat for a little while with the blonde maiden and then happily and quite respectably part from her—not without having discreetly pressed into Dorchen's well-manicured little hand a neatly folded bank-note. . . .

Besides the bars the big dance-halls are a meeting-place for the elegant *demi-monde*. In Paris there is still to be found in such dance-halls a remnant of the wild frenzy of the *cancan*. The proprietors employed professional dancers, some of them



LA GOULUE DANCING AT THE MOULIN ROUGE

Poster by H. de Toulouse-Lautrec. 1891

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very elegant girls, who danced a number of different dances every evening at the Moulin Rouge, the Bal Bullier, the Moulin de la Galette, and other dance-halls. The main attraction was the high kick, which showed off the lace-trimmed underwear, and the most famous of these *cancan* dancers was La Goulue. Her impudence and cynicism in these dances was beyond imagination. Her *grand écart*, or 'splits,' was famous. In Berlin too the elegant dance-halls were a meeting-ground for the gay world, and the dancing was just as wild and exciting as in Paris. Hans Ostwald writes about the dancers in these ball-rooms :

They kicked their legs so high that their knees could be seen. . . . Particularly one with flaxen-bleached hair, who wore a big black bow in her full chignon at the back, kicked her skirts so high when she danced that the lace trimmings of her skirt made a dazzling exhibition. And this happened every time the girl passed a table of young Berlin elegants.

On the stage it was the serpentine dance of Loie Fuller which, with the aid of fine effects of stage lighting, introduced a new fashion in the display of the female body. This dance made such a stir throughout the world that it was performed and imitated not only in the night clubs of the big capitals, but in the smallest provincial theatres. Scarf dances were popular all over Europe, for the prudery of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth permitted the appearance of nudity only when the body was covered by veils and fleshings. A dancer on the stage might appear to be naked, but she must not actually be naked. Nude dancers, such as Olga Desmond and Anita Berber, had to give special performances to which only a small private audience was admitted.

The dances of the lovely Saharet and of the "Five Barrison Sisters" all depended on the emphasis of the dancers' underwear. Max Bauer, who remembers the Barrisons, says that their appearance at the Berlin Wintergarten caused a regular

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revolution in Berlin—"a revolution which extended from the gay world to the darkest back-streets." He remembers well their first appearance. They were given a most amazing publicity for Berlin. Everywhere pictures were to be seen of the five girls, who were hardly more than schoolgirls, dressed in dainty white, with their typically English faces and roguish eyes which looked at the world with such a gleam of gay impudence. The immense, closely packed hall was tense with excitement. An effluvium of sex seemed to emanate from the stage and penetrate the closed curtains. With a deep-drawn breath the audience watched the bandmaster Wanda take up his conductor's baton, and, already half captivated, everyone listened to the novel strains of *Linger longer, Lucy!* Then the curtain was raised only a few inches and disclosed ten slender, terribly slender, little legs in white socks, with dainty fairy feet in black patent shoes. When the curtain had been fully drawn up these merry girls were seen to raise themselves with deliberate awkwardness, so that among the lace of the *frou-frous* a hand's breadth of rosy young flesh could be seen. The dance was a tremendous sensation; the hall seemed to sway beneath the thunder of the applause. For months Berlin talked of the "Five Sisters": their songs were to be heard everywhere, from the drawing-room to the street market. It is interesting to note that these five lovely sisters were the actual forerunners of the massed troupes of dancers which later became more and more famous—the "Tiller Girls," the "Admiral Girls," the "Ziegfeld Girls," and all the other troupes which enliven modern revues with the almost military exactitude of their leg and arm movements. The Barrisons were also the first who dared to display on the stage before a large public a portion of naked leg and thigh without tights, and to show their underwear, not only in the form of the old-fashioned ballet drawers of stage convention, but to make them resemble as much as possible the lace-trimmed underwear of real life. The effect on the senses was much stronger than that of the tights and

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gauze skirts of the ballet-dancers of the opera. In other respects there was a strict censorship of women's costumes on the stage, and no actress dared to appear too naked. The very beautiful Lotte Sarrow aroused the greatest indignation because she appeared as Monna Vanna, as Maeterlinck describes her, naked under her cloak, and allowed too much of this nakedness to be seen. By order of the police the costume had to be changed, and the actress was compelled to wear tights under her cloak.

A very few years later it was different. The stage, especially the revue stage, strove more and more to bring into prominence the nude female form. At first the producers sought to reach this goal by piquant undressing scenes, and the zephyr-like, elegant silk undergarments, which barely hid the lines of the body, served as a means to this end. Eventually a rich *brassière* and a glittering girdle were the only garments worn by many revue stars, and then even the covering for the breasts was discarded, and only the loin covering remained. To-day reaction has set in, and we have once again reached the point when too much nudity on the revue stage is no longer attractive. The earlier principle of *la nue habillée* is once more being followed in revue theatres.

CHAPTER XVI

MODERN EVE

THE twentieth century brought with it, even in its first decade, a complete change in the sphere of woman's social activity, and, as a result, introduced completely different standards of physical beauty, elegance, fashion, and art to correspond with the new ideal of the modern woman. Work, sport, and physical training, air, sun, and water, unite with the progress of science to create an entirely new feminine type, both spiritually and physically, a type never before seen in the history of the human family. The new Eve has as little in common with the blue-stocking as with the pampered Rococo coquette or with the instinctively sensual creature of the nineteenth century. She is herself, the symbol of her period.

It seemed as though woman had suddenly become satiated with purely feminine forms. Hips and full breasts went out of fashion, and are now attributes the possession of which an elegant modern woman must not admit. She does everything, therefore, to get rid of these monuments of a former feminine beauty, and she attempts to do this, in the first place, by every possible art of the toilet. Her closest allies in the attainment of the desired boyish figure are sport, rhythmic and gymnastic exercises, massage, and abstinence in eating and drinking.

This *gamin* type was glorified by Paul Verlaine long before it was accepted as an ideal. Verlaine's enthusiasm goes so far as to worship hermaphroditic forms. The generation of men that followed him still centres its desires in a boyish physique



SAHARET DANCING

Photograph. Berlin. 1911

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in woman, and woman complies with the desire. As Moreck expresses it in *Das weibliche Schönheitsideal* :

She stylizes her appearance on the severe, straight lines of the ephebus. In the enlightened life of Hellenism the ephebus was the symbol of physical and spiritual grace and poise. Is the modern woman, with her fantastic love of dancing and sport, likewise striving, by her emphasis of the boyish, instinctively to free herself from weight and gravitation? . . . What unknown yearning is at work here forming and fashioning?

What secret erotic power has effected this metamorphosis of woman since the turn of the century is a question as yet unanswerable, and will remain so until our period has taken its place in historical perspective, and when the feminine type, the ideal of female beauty, fashion, elegance, morals, and manners, shall have passed through a new transformation.

The modern woman has sacrificed everything which her elegant sisters of the previous centuries desired most passionately : the full bust, the sensual hip-line, long hair—and long dresses. All these attributes have become historical curiosities. Eton crop and short skirt have held the field for years, firstly because they give a woman youth—although sometimes they seem only to herself to do so—and secondly because they can be at the same time practical, becoming, hygienic, coquettish, and elegant. None the less, even to-day there are still many opponents of the modern type of woman, particularly among men, some of whom have even gone so far as to write books on the subject. And it is not only the moralizing bigots who see something indecent in every short skirt, every slender, silk-stockinged leg, every saucily curled cropped head, but even men of taste and of the world have raised their voices in protest. In France in the year 1927 there appeared a delightful little book by Pierre Lièvre entitled *Reproches à une dame qui a coupé ses cheveux*. The author recalls with melancholy those days when a beautiful woman loosened her plaits in her dressing-room, and let the flood of her unbound hair ripple

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over her neck and shoulders and arms. He regrets that there are no more surprises for men, and gives vent to his sorrow in the following words :

I who was fortunate enough to see, before this revolution, the most beautiful hair in the world feel infinite pity for the man, be he husband or lover, who is deprived of the incomparable pleasure of watching the woman he loves unloose her lovely hair in hours of intimacy, unloose it for him alone ! I pity the men who no longer know what it means to see a beautiful and beloved head lying on the pillow amid a wealth of loosened hair, the men who have no conception of how entrancing a woman can be when she hides her face under the thick abundance of her hair and peeps out with a roguish smile. Their hours of intimacy have lost their most lovely attraction, their highest pleasure. They no longer awake beside a beloved with loose, dishevelled hair, but beside a mere unkempt sleeping companion. We have all at some time shared a room with a comrade, and know that a boy when he gets out of bed in the morning is not exactly a pleasing sight. Not even his youth can save him from looking ugly. And it is the greatest pity that the women of to-day, with their clipped heads, arouse a similar memory in men, instead of the memory of heavy plaits decking the head like a crown, or of a thick knot wound like a snake in the nape of the neck. Ah ! the pleasure of loosening those long plaits ! What longing, envious looks followed the happy man who accompanied a woman with a fine head of hair, and who would probably in the next few minutes be running his hands through that wealth of loosened tresses ! Nowadays ? Why should one envy a man nowadays who is taking home a lady with a shaved neck ? One knows well that there can be no change in her in the intimacy of the bedchamber. One knows well : what she is she will remain ! . . . And if it were only her hair that woman had failed to preserve for the man of her heart. But you know that present-day dress exhibits to the public much more than the neck and hair of women, as though putting it at the disposal of the first-comer. Her arms up to the shoulders, her legs up to the thighs, her bosom, her brazenly bared back—all expose themselves to be gazed at, and women endure this gazing with an almost shameless calm. All her attractions are public : there are no more secrets.

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Fortunately this enthusiastic admirer of long hair is not typical of all modern men. We know very well that the boyish feminine figure and the emphasis on sport in present-day fashions are by no means devoid of their erotic charm, and that the radiant health of the well-trained feminine body is no less attractive to men—perhaps even more so—than the soft, white, pampered form of the woman of earlier ages. All the novels and stories of our day are full of this new, piquant charm of the sporting woman. It is particularly those girls with long legs, narrow hips, and very short skirts who, in the words of Alexander von Keller, in one of his most charming sketches, *Der schielende Wagen*, “restlessly wander the world, and bring perplexity into the hearts of men.”

These are the modern women, expert at every sport, or at least at one. Their stockings rolled down, or with bare legs, they play exceptionally good tennis, and are as expert on the golf course as their male opponents. They ride astride, they swim, they practise gymnastics, they sail, they fly. They sit, bold and enterprising, like high-spirited boys, on a motor-cycle or at the wheel of a charming *coupé* or a swift, slender sports car. They take part in tournaments and matches. They dance with grace and amazing skill the latest tangoes, fox-trots, blues, and waltzes, and by their elegance, quickness, and well-trained physique they carry off the first prizes in every kind of contest. They travel all over the world driving their own motors, in elegant yachts, in great Atlantic liners, or in *trains de luxe*. They are at home everywhere—in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, London, Budapest, Madrid, Rome, Cairo, and New York. In the fashionable resorts by the sea or in the mountains they always play the principal part, not only on account of their personal charm, but even more because of their versatility in every department of fashionable life. The woman of to-day takes everything seriously: sport, work—and pleasure. From her morning bath, from her slimming exercises, to her careful dressing and undressing for the

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evening, the care of her body is constantly in her thoughts. And she is always charming, whether in sports clothes or evening dress. Better than all her forbears the modern woman knows how to make the best of her physical attributes.

Yet, however practical it may seem, fashion is always cunning and capricious. The most obvious representatives of feminine elegance in all walks of life to-day are the great film and revue stars; their style of life exacts an amazing luxury in dress, and it has become the aim of present-day fashion to make this luxury possible to all classes by the use of cheaper materials. The difference in the elegance of a grand lady and a girl of the people is nowadays to be found only in the choice of cloth, and to narrow the gap still further there are, for those with small means, multitudes of cheap substitutes which often look deceptively real. Everything is imitated: fur, silk, leather, velvet, precious stones, and pearls. The Americanization of our period, to use Moreck's words,

not only expresses itself among the European nations by a crazy love of wealth, in the overestimation of money, and in a wild craving for pleasure, but determines the trend of fashion, which formerly received its inspiration from Paris and from the erotic femininity of the Parisienne. But America's fashion-leading class, so far as luxury in dress is concerned, is not to be sought in the exclusive upper stratum of the plutocracy, but in the chosen beauties of the film world, . . . whose tastes are similar in tendency to the luxurious *demi-monde* of the Old World. Film stars are the mannequins who launch the new fashions and give them popularity. Even in earlier periods the stage, with its often extremely subtle undressing scenes, was the appropriate shop-window in which the elegance of intimate garments aroused the enthusiasm of the women in the audience and exercised its erotic stimulation on the men. The film has enhanced this feminine exhibitionism, and gives it far wider opportunities for development. The undressing scene is one of its most reiterated effects, and induces by natural competition an extreme elegance in *lingerie*, an elegance which was once the privilege of the *demi-mondaine* and the actress, and is now the province of the film star.



ON THE SOFA
Charcoal and wash drawing by Fritz Schwarz-Waldegg
1929

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The old idea that what was under the dress would not be seen, and therefore need not be of the same delicacy and fineness as the over-dress, is no longer held by any modern woman. Nowadays, whether she be adventuress or lady, harlot or respectable woman, she must be clothed to the skin so that she has no reason to fear any curious glances. The elegant woman will blush more readily at being seen by intrusive eyes in unfashionable *lingerie* than entirely naked. The Christian ascetic gave superficial expression to her contempt for the body by clothing her flesh in a coarse, rough chemise. The woman of to-day expresses her joy in her body by clothing it in the most delicate materials, filmy stuffs which surround it like the caress of a lover and touch the skin as lightly as a breath.

With such elegance there is a corresponding increase in the use of cosmetics. The powder-puff and lipstick, rouge, eye-black, and eyebrow pencil are nowadays indispensable objects on the toilet-table of an elegant woman. It was not, however, from Paris but from America that the fashion for make-up found its way to England and Germany. The Parisienne, both *demi-mondaine* and Society lady, has always understood the art of *maquillage* to a degree bordering on virtuosity. In England, on the other hand, until just before the War, the use of powder, rouge, lipstick, and eyebrow pencil in the day-time and in the street was practised only by prostitutes. A lady of high society powdered herself very discreetly for the evening. Nowadays every elegant English woman and almost every young girl, not only in the big cities, but also in the smallest provincial towns, knows the cosmetic secrets for the beautifying of the face; and, as has been said, she has not learned this from the Parisienne—who could have inspired imitation long ago—but from the American woman. There are women in England to-day who carry out the art of rouging with a subtlety, a delicacy, and an artistry which surpasses even that of the most skilful Parisienne.

A charming article on the modern woman's art of make-up was published in *Die Dame* by the beautiful and gifted film

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actress Maria Corda. It is a great art, and much patience must be exercised to acquire it so as to make a beautiful face appear more radiant, more piquant, and more charming, or to beautify a face which has not been richly endowed by nature. Nowadays make-up is accepted as a necessary part of every elegant woman's toilet, although it is a matter of personal taste whether it be done quite discreetly or with all the frankness of an artist who displays a work of art transcending the mere imitation of nature. Maria Corda says :

If one . . . does not wish to appear tired or exhausted, if one wishes to be radiant and beautiful, there are fortunately ample means always at hand. Firstly, one must choose powder as well as rouge to match the colour of the skin. Blondes should use a mixture of white and pale pink powder ; brunettes a yellow powder mixed with a quarter of white, one eighth pink, and one eighth brown. If the skin has a tendency to redness, then the red powder should be decreased by half, and white or ivory substituted. Red blondes or red-haired women should mix a little more yellow in the powder. The room in which one makes up should be well lighted, no matter whether the light be natural or artificial. In daylight a north light should fall on to the face, so that all the lines stand out, and so that one cannot indulge in illusions. We begin with the preparation of the skin. First of all treat the face with a little cream, rubbing it gently and delicately all over. Then the grease must be carefully removed with a piece of cotton-wool, the face washed in cold water and dried by dabbing it with a towel. Not until this has been done must the skin be powdered. There should not be too much powder on the powder-puff or cotton-wool, and the powder should be put on with an upward tapping movement. No spot should be neglected, and particular attention should be paid to the shadows under the eyes. If these are to be spirited away the powder should be mixed with a little of the same red which is used for the face, and in the curve of the cheek where it joins the hollow of the eye the powder should be applied rather thickly. This is extremely important, for it is the shadows which are ugly and which rob the face of its youthful expression. Now the face receives the delicate rouge, which, if it is properly distributed and applied, can lend a really delightful air of youth. The rouge

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is put on beginning at the nostrils, becoming slightly stronger toward the cheek-bones, and gradually disappearing toward the outer curve of the cheeks. It is essential that the cheeks be equally rouged. Now breathe into the palms of the hand and press them against the cheeks and forehead. The rouge will, by this means, immediately become fixed. The neck and the arms should be treated with the same powder, and careful attention should be paid to the line from the jaw to the beginning of the neck, because here it is that the skilful or the unskilful hand may be detected. A delicate and radiant tone of skin can be attained if there is a gleam of faint lilac powder over the made-up face, but this rule applies only to the evening. Now the eyes must be attended to. The eyebrows should be freed from powder with a thin damp brush, following their natural line. Don't miss the line, or some of the dampness will go on to the forehead! If you want to lengthen the brow, draw a light line with the pencil outward and brush it with the dry brush. The deception is complete. The upper lid is given a touch of light blue powder, which is called 'Adlerblau.' The eyelashes must be brushed upward with a damp brush, either with or without colour. This makes them look longer and more curved, and gives the eye an interesting and arresting expression. The lower lashes should be lightly touched and coloured with the pencil.

The lips should never be so red as to look as though they were painted on. They should only be touched in the middle with the stick or with liquid red. The outer portions should retain the natural colour, unless they are too pale. If so, a faint suspicion of red should be applied, making the colour stronger toward the middle. Over-painted lips have a mask-like effect, and give even interesting features the vacant expression on the face of a doll.

It is not only the elegant *mondaine* who sits before a dressing-table crowded with delicate crystal bottles, with choice perfumes and face washes, with pots of face cream and silver boxes containing powder of all shades. Even the sports-girl of our day, whose well-knit body and charming boyish face have been bronzed by sun and air and water, does not entirely disdain the use of cosmetics. The little shop-girl, the typist, the middle-class girl of the big towns, the younger and the older Society woman—all, all have the one wish, to be beautiful

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and well groomed. Face massage, electric massage, medicinal baths, are not always enough. Almost without thinking woman seizes her powder-puff to add the final touch. And there are so many wonderful shades for every type of face and every kind of light, every period of the day and every season of the year, from delicate lilac and green to the deepest ochre and orange! If you prefer to display the fashionable sun-brown of the summer as long as possible and if you do not lie in the sun every day, then brown powder will supply the deficiency, for a bronzed body is now as carefully cultivated as a white one in previous ages. You must be able to show in evening dress, as well as at a *thé dansant*, the bronzed face of the sports-woman, demonstrating to the world that however little you may know about sport, you know a lot about cosmetics.

Again to quote Uzanne :

Fashion is always right when she encourages women to a discreet tinting of their eyes, brows, lips, skin, and hair. Feminine beauty is a masterpiece of nature ; it is the duty of art to increase it, to perfect it, to free it from anything commonplace. All the women of antiquity used artificial aids to beauty, and all the most celebrated women of Greece or ancient Rome, of mighty Venice or proud Florence, whose names have come down to us were past mistresses in the use of rouges, pomades, and unguents which increase the grace of the face, and give it that musical note, that mother-of-pearl shimmer, that effective strength which the great painters were able to give to their most famous portraits.

Meanwhile the accepted manner of painting the face has changed perceptibly in our own time. No lady any longer rouges and powders herself an anæmic white with hectic red cheeks. The modern woman carries no sunshade, and no longer strives, even by artificial means, to look anæmic and delicate. There are, in fact, very few victims of anæmia now, whereas it was the rule even after the turn of the century for women to look delicate. Sport has made women healthy and free, and even dancing, in spite of its aberrations, its grotesque shaking of the limbs, fashionable not long ago, has had the



DESIGN FOR DRESS OF CABARET DANCER

By Hildegard Bader. 1929

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same effect. It was modern dancing which gave the pampered, tightly laced ball beauty of yesterday the natural lissomness and suppleness of the modern girl. Famous dancing couples from New York, Paris, London, Vienna, and Berlin have shown the elegant world that the modern dance is compatible with matchless technique and admirable elegance. And both Society women and *demi-mondaines* make it their greatest ambition to imitate the new dance steps and movements with an almost equal virtuosity in the ballrooms of hotels and dance clubs. All do not succeed. But all the dance clubs of the large cities make every effort to improve the standard of dancing among their patrons, especially by the provision of professional partners. Many a Society lady engages a permanent *gigolo*. The *gigolo*, usually a young, elegant man of a South American type, even if he was born in a suburb of London, is the most modern product of our day, and is always at the disposal of ladies anxious to dance in the hotels, *cabarets*, and similar resorts. The lively modern woman, particularly if she was no longer young, suddenly got tired of waiting to be asked to dance by some chance acquaintance who happened to be present, and who probably danced terribly badly. She envied the man his power to choose his partner. Then the *gigolo* was born, whose profession and whose hope of profit made it his duty to invite even the wallflowers to dance. "Our professional dancers will permit themselves the pleasure of inviting the ladies to dance," says the notice laid on the tables by the proprietor of the night club or other dancing establishment. Or else gilt-edged cards are left lying on the tables. They bear the name of a titled gentleman—sometimes a Russian aristocrat—who offers himself as a dancing instructor or dancing partner to any who are willing to pay. The usual formula is: "Ladies who wish to dance are asked to apply to Mr So-and-so through the manager." But, in order to be able to dance well with these official dancers, the elegant lady of to-day must be herself almost as well trained

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as a professional dancer, and it is part, therefore, of the routine of a modern Society woman's life to keep up with the innumerable new dances and dance steps. For this purpose the woman of the world takes private lessons from time to time with her dancing instructor; for her pose, her movements in dancing, her step technique, must be irreproachable if she is to pass the test of the critical eyes of the onlookers sitting round the often very narrow dance floor.

It is hardly possible nowadays to imagine any kind of fashionable dance in public places without a *gigolo*, or without a dress parade by mannequins, who display the latest models of frocks, pyjamas, and bathing costumes from Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. An added attraction is an exhibition dance by a pair of ballroom dancers fresh from their triumphs in New York, London, or Paris, or some new couple just launched on their meteoric career through the dancing firmament and ready to begin their triumphal progress through the whole world. The names of these fashionable dancing couples are on every tongue, and they are paid immense salaries. It is usually an æsthetic pleasure to watch them, for both partners attach great importance to faultless technique and distinction of style. Both are usually young; he very handsome and immaculately dressed, and she beautiful, elegant, and well bred. Some influence on fashion and on the rhythm of life has undoubtedly been exercised by stage dancers also, in particular by the negro dancer Josephine Baker. She, with her wonderful figure, is among the most popular revue stars of our time. She introduced the Black Bottom into Europe, which, for a short time, although in a somewhat more modified form than that danced by Miss Baker, was danced in the most elegant night clubs of European capitals by Society women and *demi-mondaines*. Josephine's triumphs in dancing owed nothing to any elaborate or costly *toilettes*. Her lithe brown grace and her great powers as a mimic and dancer were all she had. "I have not even the distraction,"

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she once said sadly to the writer Vautel, who wrote an article about her, "of changing my costume six or seven times in my dressing-room as the other stars do." All she had to put on in the various scenes of certain revues in which she appeared was a girdle of green feathers, a belt of straw, or a garland of artificial bananas. Her one great task at her theatre dressing-table was to plaster her nigger curls with tar so that they looked as though they were lacquered. Josephine called this weapon of seduction the "Baker Fix."

As Josephine Baker brought the Black Bottom from America, so the charming dancer Gaby Deslys, who met with such a tragic end, imported jazz from New York. The first jazz band in Europe was heard in the Casino de Paris at the end of the World War, when Gaby Deslys, decorated with ostrich feathers, paradise plumes, and diamonds, danced with her partner, Harry Pilcer, an almost mechanized bacchanal. The modern atmosphere of the variety theatre was thus created, and conquered the world, in the same way as sport, the motor-car, the shingled head, and dresses to the knees. All attempts to force woman again into whalebone armour, skirts with trains, or to a life which is detrimental to her beauty and health will fail, for the modern woman has her strongest ally in the modern man.

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